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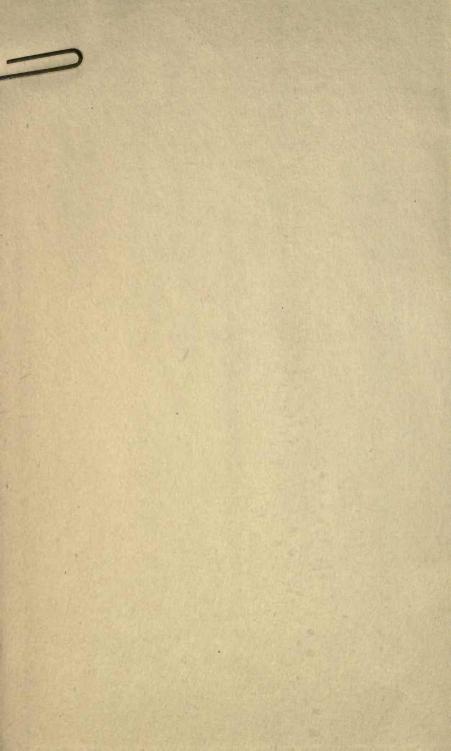
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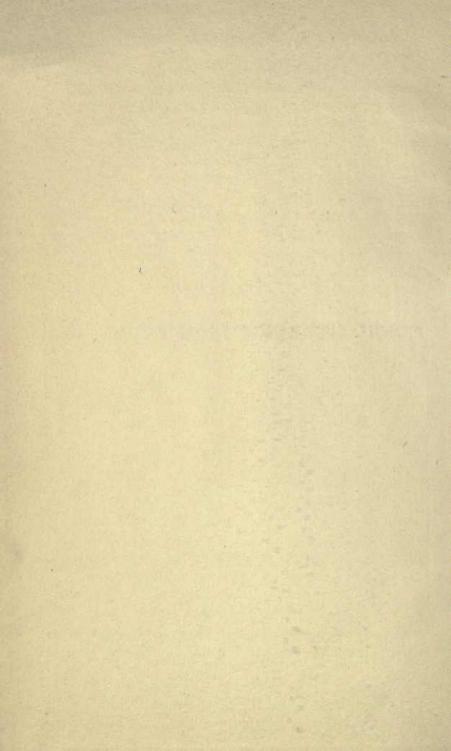
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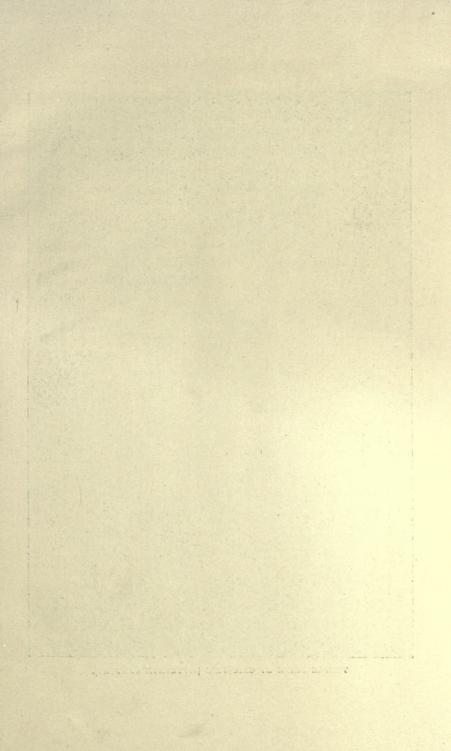
BUA. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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TEMPLE SCENE BY CHIU-YING (FIFTEENTH CENTURY).

PENCIL SPEAKINGS FROM PEKING

BY

A. E. GRANTHAM

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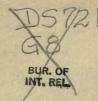
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Pencil Speakings from Peking

CHAPTER I

"OBEDIENT TO HEAVEN," Shun Tien Fu, such is the official name of Peking.

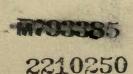
And it is more than just a name.

Not that Peking is free from the rags, the dirt, the greeds, the envies, the dishonesties, all the manifold disobediences to Heaven which characterize other human capitals. Of these it possesses its full share.

But there is a brooding sense of destiny about its walls, beaten upon by so many storms, brightened by so much bygone splendour.

Trees and temples innumerable break the stupefying obsession of merely secular buildings with the endless joy of things immortal and divine.

It contains a Palace of Heavenly Purity, a Temple of Distinguished Happiness; just outside the gates, a monastery where they understand the Secret of Existence! Before the last armed invasion of the foreigner in his just but somewhat uncontrolled wrath, A.D. 1900, Peking was the treasure-house of all the perfections of centuries of Chinese art. Lovely remnants, exquisite traces of the former mighty inspiration, linger in the sheen of silken embroideries, the glimmer of jades and ivories, the wonderful blues of ancient enamels offered for sale at its



fairs and curio-shops. And Peking still is the administrative centre of the oldest Empire on earth, an Empire whose records stretch in an almost unbroken chain from all the unsolved problems of to-day backwards through the tramp of Napoleon's, of Jhenghis Khan's, of Alexander's armies, the triumph and decay of Rome, the brief beauty of Athens, the magnificence of Babylon, the granite majesty of Egypt, to man's first tentative efforts on the difficult path of civilized life.

One of China's earliest kings is called the Dweller in a Nest (Yu Ch'ao), which carries imagination back to those wellnigh inconceivably distant days when human habitations, now evolved into spacious structures with doors and windows and elaborate systems of heating and lighting, were nothing but rough shelters for the young against the inclemencies of the weather, the depredations of wild beasts.

Others of these ancient sovereigns, sages, priests, patriarchs as much as kings, worshipped Shang Ti, the Supreme Ruler, in the solitude of lofty mountain-summits, and settled the seasons of the year by the stars of the evening sky.

Yet others are associated by tradition with such primitive inventions as that of fishing-nets, the art of counting by means of knotted ropes, the use of fire, the yoking of horses to chariots. Now the elected head of this same nation drives in an automobile—bomb-proof—under Christian teaching the rate of progress has been so great.

This vast period is computed by the Chinese themselves at figures approximating four thousand centuries—the whole sweep of time from A.D. 1900 to the very beginning of human life. Scholars fix the emergence of the first faint historical outlines out of the haze of mere myth and legend at about 2800 B.C. This makes Chinese history already cover a period of forty-seven centuries—centuries coloured with all the vicissitudes of darkness and light, weakness and strength, expansion and contraction which throb through the life of a race with the pulsation of some gigantic tide.

The impression of immobility and stagnation China gave Europeans, accustomed to swifter changes and smaller measures of time, is due not to any real absence of movement in her history, but to the immense number of years over which these movements are spread. What further contributed to fasten the stigma of excessive rigidity on China is that with her the past, instead of having, as in Europe, shrunk to some vague recollections artificially saved from oblivion by the lore of archæological societies, has remained the live natural memory of daily custom, of religious rites, of the ornamentation current in architecture and handicrafts.

Thus the primitive matriarchal system survives in the position of honour and power held by the mother; the dietary of the early pastoral stage is still the food offered in sacrifice to gods and spirits; and the awe with which the early dweller on the banks of the Yellow River watched the movements of the gigantic isaurians wallowing in primal ooze, the wonder that filled him as he gazed on the expanse of heaven, on the rise and fall of the foamflecked edge of rushing waters, find their last echo in those innumerable dragons and clouds and white-crested waves which flow with the ease of instinct from the hands of the Chinese artists of to-day.

The very shape of the round tumulus so frequent among the family-tombs scattered in the fields outside the city is a reproduction of the primitive kraal; and it is possible to recognize in the Peking cart, with its weather-proof roof and its complete springlessness, the early home of those clans who, being addicted to the pastoral life, were compelled to shift their dwellings according to the needs of their flocks.

And China remembers her beginnings so well, because her civilization developed wholly on its own roots, because no large body of foreign tradition has ever forced itself between her present and her past, obscuring and defacing the latter. She was spared the fate which overtook the Northern and Middle European tribes, whose racial idiosyncrasies were crushed beneath the double onslaught of imperial and sacerdotal Rome, and almost wholly obliterated by yet another alien influence, that of ancient Greece, which the Renaissance brought to the front.

There is a profound justification for ancestor-worship in China; the modern Chinaman does owe practically all he thinks and feels to his lineal forefathers. The modern European, on the contrary, however Celtic or Germanic his blood may be, prays to a God brought to him from Palestine, fashions his law-courts in the style of Rome, his statues in that of Athens, and derives only his body and his bodily passions, none of his thoughts and ideals, from his physical ancestors. He gains thereby in versatility, in breadth of outlook, loses in repose and dignity. Restlessness increases. Happiness suffers. The Chinaman, Chinese right through, achieves content more readily. His is an harmonious

development, the unthwarted elaboration of the motives supplied by inborn tendencies, free from the contradictions between natural impulse and acquired mentality, such as trouble the soul of the European with incurable division.

What of foreign elements did filter into the Chinese mind came from nations immeasurably less civilized, and therefore chiefly took the form of a few new superstitions added to the native stock, a few barbarisms grafted on to the penal code. By rare good fortune the core of purely Chinese tradition was sufficiently established not merely to maintain itself uncontaminated by the cruder beliefs of Turks and Tartars, but to at least officially impose itself upon the latter. Even Buddhism, though frequently favoured by the court, only meant one religion the more. It did not supersede the indigenous cults nor intrinsically modify the magnificent body of ethical and political thoughts on which K'ung-fu-tsze stamped the seal of his master-mind, and whose beginnings reach away back to the third millennium B.C., to the three epoch-making rulers, Yao, Shun, and Yü, who either actually or as seen through the golden haze of pious tradition governed their people according to the bright ordinances of Heaven.

When it is asked to what system of discipline, to what principle of cohesion, the Chinese owe this unique power of endurance, some answer it is due to their remoteness from the great currents of general history, their seclusion from its turmoils and upheavals. But this view belongs to that false perspective which swells the happenings of one's own corner of the globe into events of earth-shaking importance, reducing those of distant

parts to such minute dimensions they can be ignored altogether.

Historians, bewildered by the task of distinguishing between Hsiung-Nu, Eleuths, Ouigars, Khins, and Kitans, and all those multitudinous Tartar, Tunguse, Turco-Tibetan tribes sweeping round the Middle Kingdom in a gigantic semicircle, may assert that China developed in tranquil isolation. It saves them a headache, which no doubt is of more immediate importance to them than inquiring too closely about accuracy.

In reality, throughout history, China's boundaries were pressed on by other national groups, some of them frequently well organized for aggression. Then, true to that delightful human trait of belabouring with abuse those against whom cleaner weapons happen to be too blunt to preclude all fear, she would call them barbarians and devils.

To the full she experienced all the boons and bickerings of a fairly active commercial intercourse, the shortlived alliances and long-lived enmities usual among neighbours.

Her list of wars is almost as long as that by which, under the attractive name of glory, the British Empire has been smelted together, but to her honour be it said, most of her wars were defensive. Quite early her soldiers were exhorted to be like tigers and panthers, like bears, yea, like grisly bears.

From time immemorial well-worn trade-routes linked her up with Northern, Southern, and Western Asia. True, these routes were often mere tracks lost among the exuberance of the summer crops or foundering in the rainswelled foam of slippery fords, mere mountain-paths climbing steeply past the Cleft of the Dragon to the Gateway of Nephrite, that Ultima Thule of China, where across wind-swept plains of shifting sands the East gazes into the distances which hold the threatening greyness of the West. But camels, wheelbarrows, mules and yaks, and even biped beasts of burden, are not exacting as to the gauge of their roadway. Slow but sure, they sufficed to keep China in touch with nations anxious to barter their surplus produce for hers. And an exchange of goods always carries some exchange of ideas in its train.

When Buddhism started its propagation of faith, Indian missionaries travelled along roads traced for centuries by the purveyors of more worldly merchandise.

Not before the latter-day Manchus, in the eighteenth century of our era, did China deliberately close herself against foreign trade; then possibly only under the impulse of fear which, with unerring instinct, scented the wolf beneath the immaculate fleece of that most cunning, most ruthless of all predatory animals, the modern manufacturer on the trail of new markets.

Isolation, therefore, will not account for China's longevity. Is it, as some observers suggest, the power of the family, the closeness of the bonds with which the clan links up its members? No doubt where the family, not the individual, is considered the social unit, there is much wholesome discipline for the young, much tender reverence for the aged, an abundance of charity for the poor, the sick, the mentally deficient. All of which is purely beneficial, and ancestor-worship, the supreme expression of the idea of the family, is one of the most beautiful institutions man has evolved out of his sorrow

and his love. As nothing else could, it brings home to the humblest toiler how thin is the division between yesterday and to-morrow, how reverently he should cherish the lives of those who brought him forth, and who even after their death control his fate; how carefully he ought to guard his thoughts and actions, since they do not end in the grave, but are perpetuated with all the good and evil in them indefinitely, through generation upon generation.

In these ways the cult of the family has undoubtedly exerted a salutary and conservative influence. Yet for the faithful handing down of the body of tradition which stamps a group of families into a nation, the power of the family alone would not have been sufficient. Without the State, which insisted on an uniform standard of education and made the Classics the only gateway to official rank, the Chinese would have lacked their most potent agent of cohesion. Also the family, with its tendency to discourage originality and independence of character, to develop an unfair system of legal responsibility, to consider its own interests before those of the community, is as much a source of weakness as of strength.

If, then, neither splendid isolation nor the strength of family-ties contains the key to the puzzle of Chinese longevity, where is it to be sought? Might it not lie in that one fact, small but deeply significant, that of the many nations of the world the Chinese alone have found the name "Obedient to Heaven" for their capital?

True, Peking's moral record is not much better, perhaps it is even worse, than that of capitals endowed with humbler names. Inside the glittering pavilions of its Imperial City there have been murders, plots, and every form of criminal corruption; on its walls and bastions veritable orgies of military inefficiency; and within the pillared seclusion of its temples and academies, ignorance and stupidity have brayed aloud.

But a nation's ideals are scarcely ever the harbourlights where it casts anchor. They are the beacons which flash a momentary guidance across the dark paths of human wandering, the sparks which reveal the quality of the fire from which the race derives its dominant inspiration.

That it was not political liberty, military glory, monopoly of trade-routes, nor any such appeals to pride, greed, or vanity, but obedience to Heaven, to the Tao, creation's eternal ordinance, submission to the principles of reason and of righteousness which the Chinese selected as the main orientation of their lives—might not this contain the secret of their amazing vitality?

For surely, unless conscience is not the infallible organ whereby human beings sense the commands of the Highest nor the faithful mirror which reflects the light of Eternity, then that State whose foundations were dug deep and broad, four-square with benevolence and justice, should endure above all others. It is built on the rock of divine revelation, not on the shifting sands of self-centred ambitions and temporary gains.

Races are impelled towards empire-building by such a variety of motives, by lust of plunder, of profit, of renown. Only the chosen few create an empire by the mere charm of their suasion, the magnetism of a genuinely superior civilization; and it is their work alone that contains the elements of anything approaching permanence. The others reach the limit of their powers of expansion at the end of

a very few years or centuries. The Empire founded by the Mongols is a typical example. Their rallying-cry was plunder, the craving for possession begotten by the hunger of the Steppe. Without the sure prospect of loot, of the rapid, however perilous, acquisition of wealth, even the stupendous will-power of Jhenghis Khan could not have welded their predatory instincts, their ingrained talent for brigandage, into one of the most efficient armies to which the world ever had to submit—for a while. Lacking even the shadow of ethical justification, the Mongol Empire fell asunder the moment the conquered nations had had time to recover from the devastating shock of the onslaught.

Similarly, the military genius of Napoleon made the hunger of the French masses, impoverished by revolution and the enmity of England, serve his own hunger for dominion and glory, build up for himself and his family the fabric of a large empire.

But the pursuit of military glory overrides almost every permanent interest of civilized life. It is worthless as the corner-stone of any State but that of marauding nomads. What Napoleon's sword piled up and called an empire did not endure for the short span of his own days.

Rome built more solidly. The driving-force of her conquests was love of profit, the desire to gather to herself as cheaply and as swiftly as possible the best produce of the world, the choicest fruit of other nations' labour. Consequently her rapacity was tempered by the necessity of keeping the producer in a fit condition to produce, avoiding the existence in an organized form of starved and discontented populations, from whom bankers and traders, the real pioneers of Roman expansion, could not have extracted satisfactory returns. For that reason a

considerable measure of good government and a great development of the means of transit characterized her rule. But it served material needs only. Throughout the Mediterranean seaboard the consolidation of the Roman Empire was marked by a steady intellectual decline, till the danger level was reached where the efficient administration of a great State could no longer be maintained. With inevitable fatality this brought about the end. For to try to live by bread alone leads as surely to destruction, as the attempt to feed only on dreams would lead to the dissolution of the body. Dreams were certainly not encouraged by the arid uniformity of Roman dominion. When among its subjugated masses an ideal did arise, no proper room could be found for it, and what should have proved a bond of union, a source of regeneration, became in the heavy hands of the Divus Augustus Romanorum a principle of revolt and disintegration.

How differently was Buddhism, the Eastern manifestation of the same religious movement, received in China! No casting forth there of its adherents to the claws and fangs of wild beasts, no driving of their devotions into the damp and the darkness of subterranean catacombs. With the large tolerance inculcated by their early teachers, who stood too close to heaven not to feel that no hard-and-fast limit can be assigned to the number of roads leading towards it, the Chinese welcomed what of additional light glowed in this foreign religion, used it as a golden bridge wherewith to reach the minds of their Tartar subjects, to whose obtuser understanding the clear air of Confucianism was somewhat too rarefied. But Confucianism remained the paramount spiritual influence of the governing classes. Rightly so. For it is not the

shunning of the work of this earth, the aspiration towards some beyond void of all sin, struggle, and sorrow, but the courageous acceptance of earth as it is, of men as they are, that constitutes the truly great ruler. Chinese officials, glancing through the pages of their Classics, could read the following:—

"If outlying communities resist your authority, cultivate the arts of refinement and goodness in order to attract them, and when you have attracted them, make them happy and contented."

"In private life show self-respect; in the management of affairs, thoroughness and grasp; in your dealings with others, honesty and conscientiousness. Never abandon these principles even among savages."

"Government is good when it makes happy those who live under it and attracts those who live far away."

Under such guidance, revealing imperial instincts of the highest order, it is not surprising that China became one of the few empires which grow more by the magnetism of moral superiority than by the might of soldiers or the enterprise of merchants. Only the banker, the lawyer, the publican, and the builder followed in the wake of the Roman eagles. The dragon-emblazoned banners were accompanied, often preceded, by the scholar, the poet, the artist, bearing gifts of enduring value.

Haltingly perhaps, but on the whole wonderfully well, China did once in her portion of the globe achieve what Walt Whitman holds up to the American democracy as an ideal still waiting to be realized—a great moral and religious civilization combined with and justifying a great material civilization.

With singular clearness her sages realized the three

forces which press upon human consciousness, and against which it must necessarily react—Heaven, Earth, Man, or, as it might be expressed, the world of spiritual influences, the world of material objects, and the world of self and of social relationships. And since all three enter into the field of consciousness with equal insistence and frequency, equal sacredness was attached to them all, and the utmost care and reverence enjoined in the individual's attitude towards them.

In course of time this was elaborated into scrupulous observance of forms and ceremonies having all the solemnity of a regular ritual. Modern Europeans, in the pride of their matter-of-fact wisdom, mock at the Chinese for this. Yet amidst those uncharted vortices of vibrations, attractions, repulsions, affinities, causes and consequences which eternally palpitate throughout all things visible and invisible, joining, severing, building, dissolving, who dare state exactly where the divine ends and the profane begins? The Chinaman, who attributes sanctity to them all, may be nearer truth than those who would compress holiness between the covers of one book, sacredness within the precincts of one building. To him it is not only his gods that are sacred, but also his parents, his dead, his superiors, his friends. The Emperor's palace, the magistrate's yamen, are guarded by the same symbolical lions which protect the holiness of temples. Their architectural plan is similar, and the kowtow-the humble bowing down of the head to the very dust at which stiffnecked ambassadors jibbed so vehemently—is given alike to ancestor, Emperor, and God. Are not the bonds between these and the individual all equally full of mystery, beauty, holiness? And the great Mother Earth, who feeds him with her harvests, comforts him with her flowers, delights him with her springtide, scourges him with her winter-tempests, and at last enfolds him wholly in the grave, is sacred to him also.

To the loneliness of her mountains, to the bounteousness of her fields, to the breadth of her rivers, he builds altars and brings the offerings of his worship. Brings these as well to the glories of the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars in the majesty of their infinite precession. Thus he keeps in touch with the harmonies of Nature and anchors his life in her tranquil depths, not in the shallowness of his own restless and short-sighted reasonings. For the Chinese, so often called hard-headed, practical, unimaginative, are really far more swayed by delight in poetry and natural beauty, by a delicate cherishing of hallowed traditions and tender emotions, than can even be remotely apprehended in the hard categories of our speed-deadened brains.

Above all, they are an artistic, passionate people, quick-witted and quick-handed, no doubt another reason for K'ung-fu-tsze's insistence on ceremonious observances; not as an end in themselves, but as a means of obtaining that precious interval between impulse and action without which reflection has no time to operate and a hot-blooded race loses its chance of obtaining self-control and of rising above the level of the savage. For this also, European commentators have been swift to mock, to try to pull the mighty teacher down to their own level, describing him as a prig and a pedant.

It is, however, just possible that K'ung-fu-tsze understood the needs of the people among whom he was born and bred somewhat better than alien missionaries who dwell among them only a few years, and are not specially noted for breadth of outlook or clearness of vision even in their own country. His teaching never aspired to be a transcendental system resting on miracles, gilding the clouds of human misery with magnificent promises whose fulfilment lies in the distance of some future reincarnation. It is a body of rules, sayings, examples, gathered by a man of powerful intellect, wide experience, and singularly upright character for the guidance of his fellow-mortals in the conduct of their lives in this workaday world. It is there in their own immediate surroundings, nay, closer still, in their own heart, that they are to cultivate the harmony which is the only foundation for real happiness and prosperity. They are enjoined to be just, sincere, charitable, honest, and loval, sedulous in the performance of duties, careless of rewards, faithful in service, benevolent in ruling, wide in their sympathies, earnest in learning. And he believed the attainment of so much excellence possible because, like most great ethical teachers, he preserved his faith in the fundamental goodness of human nature despite the many bitter disappointments of his life. Yet he did not forget that the born saint, the holy man, who alone can safely follow every impulse of his heart, is exceedingly rare; that to the vast majority, not so much the finding as the remaining in the path of virtue is the difficulty, necessitating careful training, constant vigilance, unremitting attention. He realized that so exacting a task was beyond the reach of the average mortal, who must be given the support of a set of habits automatically tending to right behaviour, if he is to be kept in the path of virtue at all. Such a set of habits he saw could be acquired most readily

through the careful cultivation of manners. Hence their importance in his educational scheme. The results fully justified his method. There is an elegance of forms, a gracefulness of thought, among educated Chinese, which can only be compared with the stately charm of the French aristocracy of the eighteenth century.

The twentieth-century Chinaman who gives up his traditional regard for ceremoniousness loses far more than the outer show of a superficial politeness; the mainstay of his self-discipline is shaken. And perhaps it is not only the Oriental who degenerates into quite a despicable type of being when he discards the strait-jacket of traditional manners, for the Western counterpart of K'ung-fu-tsze's princely man, the English gentleman, is likewise moulded far more effectually by devotion to form than by fear of punishment in a future world, in which, for practical purposes, he only takes the most tepid interest.

Of course, regard to form can be over-elaborated. What human institution was ever so cunningly devised as not to be susceptible of abuse in the hands of fools, who, like the poor, are with us always. But the wise who enjoined their use should not be blamed for this. K'ung-fu-tsze himself warns against over-emphasis of ceremonies, points out the infinitely greater value of natural goodness. Undoubtedly he and Lao-Tsze and all the sages who in the great days of the Chou dynasty combined in their teaching the intuitions of the legendary past with the meditations of the historic present, wove therefrom a banner round which countless generations of the future could rally, a tent of refuge wherein the soul of China could shelter under the many waves of misfortune

that swept over her. Their details are often wrong. At so early a period the accumulation of exact knowledge was so very much smaller, and the area of the unknown so incomparably larger than at present, error was almost unavoidable.

But when, face to face with the puzzle of the Universe, they discovered for man's guidance among the bewildering myriad of things the Tao, the divine way, the inner reality which creates and maintains life; when they saw holiness in Heaven and Earth and Man; when they said " Equilibrium is the foundation of the world, harmony its great thoroughfare"; when they made the cultivation of humaneness and sincerity, of reverence for the feelings of others and for the moral dignity of one's own personality, the highest goal of human endeavour, then surely it must be admitted that their main bearings were absolutely right, that they directed their people's aspirations not towards hollow idols of the market-place, panacea suitable for the ills of an hour, but to objects of immortal significance exceeding in value, outlasting in time the rattle of ballot-boxes, the power of armaments, the speed of railways, the precision of machinery, the exploitation of material wealth which spreads such a din in the up-to-date world, such hurry and such hatreds in the up-to-date soul. And because they built on the only foundation that never gives way, spiritual rectitude, their race persisted as a living entity through all the disintegrating influences of political disasters, foreign conquests, and periodic lassitude.

For more than twenty centuries. It is only to-day that the Chinese mind is troubled, wavering, beginning to wonder whether the old tree whose roots plunge into so immeasurable a past, whose branches have given shelter and nourishment to such countless generations, should not be cut down to make room for the plants and the weeds imported from abroad. And some of the weeds are of a particularly rank species, like the conceit of the Americanized students who seriously mistake their little wicks of foreign-taught knowledge for a great light by which the destinies of a whole empire should be regulated. When one hears a specimen of Republican Young China in creaky yellow boots, ill-fitting tweeds, and an intolerable cap impudently whistling and cracking a dirty riding-crop in the Temple of K'ung-fu-tsze, the very hall where Emperors used to worship Wisdom in the purity of early dawn, one begins to fear that the death-knell has rung even to Chinese vitality.

Irreverence towards what is left of the trivialities of the past is stupid enough—contempt of its real greatness criminal folly. Yet this idea of completely breaking with the past, of pulling down all it has built, even of irreplaceable beauty, of paramount holiness, has often tempted political hotheads. Never without grave injury to a nation that allowed itself to be seduced by their vapid arguments. The clean slate of their theories gives scope to the drawing up of plans of such faultless symmetry, such dazzling magnificence, straightway they are taken for reality, and the millennium they grandiloquently promise is reckoned on as an absolute certainty. But there never is a clean slate—either one on which the ancient writing is still legible in much of its mellowed wisdom, or one from which it has been rubbed out in a hideous blur of dust and tears. On this begrimed slate what would a China that has mutilated and slain her

splendid past write, or rather scrawl?—for no one can write any but his own language. Windy tags of republican liberty, divorced from reality even in the country of their origin; undigested and indigestible scraps of European ethics in which the theory of the missionary makes a shrill discord with the practice of the commercial and diplomatic carpet-bagger; the insidious poison of an ignorant press; all the ugliness and unhappiness of a machine-driven civilization. As a matter of fact, had the descendants of the old Chinese sages preserved the spirit instead of letting the dust and cobwebs of worship of the letter clog their brains, it is they who should be sending missionaries to the rest of the world.

What a slump there would be in Wall Street if its swarming brokers were suddenly forced to carry out K'ung-fu-tsze's dicta: "In human affairs make righteousness your only aim; when offered an opportunity for gain, think only of your duty."

And what an awkward silence would befall the European Chancelleries if Lao-Tsze's fierce denunciation, "There is no sin greater than ambition, no vice more repulsive than covetousness," were to be flashed out at their counciltables by a Power greater than all the triple, quintuple, or even centuple alliances of their sinister diplomacy.

But habit is stronger than precept. No doubt within an hour the gambling in Putumayo rubber, the cornerings in wheat, would be resumed as feverishly as ever; the map of the world again be unrolled and marked out with blood-red pencillings into spheres of influence, protectorates, schemes of annexations, divisions of pelf.

That wherein Europe really does excel—her exact sciences, her power of organization—could be introduced

without destroying anything of the past that is worth preserving.

And the old wisdom is surely far too vital still to be flung upon the dust-heap of dead things. It contains the most workable, the most enlightened of all the charts wherewith man has attempted to outline his road to the divine. It bases its appeal for virtue on what Schopenhauer rightly says is the only truly moral foundation—altruism; it proclaims no fiery "shalt nots" against the research of truth, opposes no blank wall of miraculous beliefs to the study of exact science, lays greater stress on the cultivation of self-discipline and letters than on dogmatic speculations about the nature of the unseen.

Japan has demonstrated what wonderful amalgamations are possible between old and new, between the wisdom of the East and the knowledge of the West. She learnt to work railways, steamers, telephones, machineguns, every device, good or evil, of modern technical ingenuity. But there was no overthrowing of old palaces; no desecration of ancient altars; only a building at their side of new schools, barracks, workshops, modelled on the most efficient foreign patterns. She introduced a parliament, but the power of the Mikado was retained and even increased. To pour new wine into old bottles is one thing, quite another to graft valuable young shoots on to an old tree with so much skill that all the strength of its sap flows through them, feeds them, and helps them to grow into living branches, clothing the weatherbeaten trunk with fresh beauty. The new shoots will not then deteriorate into puny sticks, shrivelling on ground wherein they have no roots.

What of foreign-made contrivances and institutions,

railways, post-offices, parliaments, etc., have already been bestowed on China so far, mostly give that melancholy impression. They are exotics dumped down anywhere, anyhow, lacking all arterial connection with the real needs of the people. The most pressing of these can, in fact, not be met by any purely mechanical manipulation of matter or any external rearrangement of administrative machinery. It is a faith that has to be kindled in the blood of the people, a spring that has to be touched in its heart to release all their latent stores of energy and guide them into healthy, life-giving channels. That faith is a patriotism which would sweep through the length and breadth of the country, through all its classes and its masses, with the vitalizing current of a thoughtful, purposeful, patient, silently persevering devotion to the ideal of a China safe and strong and selfsufficient, independent within her own boundaries, great with the greatness of her ancient Emperors, wise with the wisdom of her ancient sages, beautiful with the beauty created by her own ancient artists. Only the best patriotism will serve.

She has tried the worst, the type that is based not on love of one's country but on hatred of the foreigner, not on humble appreciation of the deep responsibilities attaching to national power but on arrogant blindness to one's own shortcomings. In the midsummer madness of the Boxer outbreak she gave it full rein. Like all such explosions of blatant nationalism, bubbles of poisongas fermenting on a swamp of ignorance and fear, whether they vent themselves in besieging legations in Peking or sacking them in Petrograd, burning missionary compounds in Tientsin or wrecking alien shops in Bethnal

Green, it added nothing either to the dignity or strength of the country on whose behalf it was set on foot. Indeed, being quite the worst of its kind, it brought nothing but shame and misery to all Chinese, both to those who had sanctioned and to those who had opposed it. Of the wounds, so many self-inflicted. received then there has as yet been no complete recovery. The violent remedy of a revolution, snatched at in the bitterness of humiliation, is still on its trial. But in times of serious peril a mere change of leaders is seldom sufficient. And China's peril is far more serious than can safely be uttered. She has allowed her one great patriot and statesman to sink into a grave dug by sheer despair at the blindness of his own people, the treachery of double-faced friends, the relentlessness of the expectant conqueror. The triple-clawed dragon of foreign militarism, of cosmopolitan finance and religious propaganda is lying right across her throat. Whether even the semblance of liberty can be saved is becoming daily more doubtful. The oldest empire of the world may sink into a dependency of one of the newest; the race that gave the world its soundest code of ethics, its most graceful poetry, its finest handicrafts, may get crushed into a mere reservoir of coolie-labour to pile up dividends for the least ethical of all human associations, the great financial, commercial, and industrial trusts which, under the spurious cry of progress, democracy, and civilization, are gradually drawing the whole of mankind into the grasp of their polyp-like tentacles.

And in face of so dark a prospect the public mind is confused, divided, vacillating, losing hold of its old moorings, unable to grip any others. The very style of dressing,

in which hideous woollen caps, frightful foreign boots, shoddy American overcoats are worn simultaneously with Chinese silks which have preserved the old elegance, though even they have lost the old beauty of colour; the European-planned buildings, with all the vulgarity of the West added to the present indigence of the East; the listlessness of khaki-clad officers stumbling over cumbrous swords, no doubt imported from abroad by some dishonest dealer in discarded military equipments, all indicate helpless groping in a maze of antagonistic tendencies, utter bewilderment at the swiftness of the changes convulsing the world. By no means the bewilderment of dotage; just the open-mouthed stupefaction of children on whom too many new toys, too many difficult lessons, have been showered all at once. And some of the lessons were taught at the point of the bayonet. China needs peace, internal and external, to recover her breath, leisure in which to count over her losses and her gains, lest even the gains end only in losses.

For it is neither by slavish nor spasmodic imitation of foreign inventions, still less by petulant outbursts of violence, she can hope to weather the threatening storm.

When Prussia lay apparently helpless under the heel of Napoleon, she did not train secret "Patriotic Harmony Fists" for the sudden massacre of isolated French garrisons. Far from it; she even showed active pity to the broken fragments of his army fleeing back from the Russia they had been sent out to vanquish. What she did do was to remedy her own defects, to form an union for the cultivation of virtue. She deepened her soul that it might gather strength at the fitting time to cast out the invader and to regain control of her own destiny.

She succeeded. She had trained her patriotism into a force that transmuted internal jealousies into joyful rivalries, sluggishness into energy, fear of personal loss or danger into a passion for self-sacrifice. Such a spirit is invincible. No Power or combination of Powers can in the long run subjugate a people determined not to be conquered, resolved to forgo all happiness except the supreme one of independence, to suffer all losses except that of loyalty to its own ideals.

But patriotism is a subtle quality. Its taproot is pride, which needs to be fed by the self-reliance flowing from consciousness of actual or from faith in potential greatness. It is neither from the present nor from the immediate future that the Chinese can derive this indispensable assurance. Therefore they must turn to the past. And the glories of their past are so great they should prove an undying incentive for patriotic effort, a certain promise of the glories of a future it depends on the men of today not to render impossible of fulfilment. Of foreign enlightenment they must take only that which really is enlightenment, not a craving for novelty, an illusory gain in monetary profit, a mere change from one superstition to another.

They must drink deep at the fountain of their own spiritual wealth, cleared from the dust of too many generations of commentators, and despite the seeming triumph of intrigue, greed, injustice, and violence, they must cling for guidance to the great principles of their own sages.

Placed in the clear dawn of history, before the din and music of human theories and activities had reached their present gigantic and confusing proportions, these wise men of old could discern more readily than we moderns the goal and purpose of man's life on earth, the secret of his destiny, which is none other than the realization of eternal harmonies from among the fleeting discords of the hour, the steadfast shaping of a world of beauty, order, and wisdom out of the seething chaos of violence and ignorance, and above the revolts of savage appetites courageous obedience to the patient ways of the divine.

CHAPTER II

OF books on, round, and about China the name is legion. There is a library of them in Peking said to be worth many thousands of pounds of minted gold. But not a few are the work of missionaries who, really believing the nineteenth-century superiority of Europeans over Chinese is due to their trust in the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, and nowise connected with the powers of steam and electricity or with the long range and deadly accuracy of British gunnery, feel called upon to look down on Chinese thought and religion with a smile of patronizing pity.

Taken from an angle of purely imaginary moral superiority, their pictures, however full of painstaking detail, are so lamentably out of focus, they are neither pleasing nor profitable to look upon. They almost tempt the wish that a second Shih Huang Ti might arise and order the swift and total burning of them all.

Of others compiled without doctrinal bias, those treating of the complete history of China are weighted down by the immense difficulty of compressing forty centuries of an unknown people's chronicles into a shape that is both readable and portable. Only a Macaulay or a Mommsen could succeed in so gigantic an undertaking, and Macaulays and Mommsens are not born every day. Indeed, their

race may have been obliterated for many decades on those tragic battlefields where Europe is intent on committing hara-kiri. Consequently, for some time to come we must make shift with a shadowy outline, a few bright splashes of colour here and there amid the impenetrable darkness which is the past history of even the greatest of nations. Possibly that, in any case, is all our brains, crowded with the thousand cares and pictures of to-day, are able to retain. And these fugitive glimpses, if they are to have any vital meaning for us, must be realized in their connection with those general laws of human development which systematic research has begun to unravel.

Now, China, being the only modern State boasting of a history conterminous with the beginnings of civilization, illustrates these laws more clearly than any other country, especially the laws of beginnings.

Where should the beginnings of the Chinese be placed? Some authors, consciously or unconsciously influenced by pre-Darwinian beliefs in the origin of man, would trace them to the districts which gave birth to the Sumero-Accadian or Babylonian culture. They condemn the unfortunate Chinese to years of weary wandering through the moving sands of deserts, across bleak pasture-lands, over inhospitable mountain-ranges, before allowing them to settle in the fertile alluvial plains where they are first found established. Even there they give them no peace, though only peace fosters civilization. They plunge them into incessant feuds with some savage aborigines, whom, by virtue of a superior culture mysteriously preserved during years of trekking through a pathless wilderness, they totally rout and dispossess. Note that

these aborigines are also supposed to have wandered into China, perhaps washed ashore there as the undesirable flotsam of the backwash of the biblical deluge. There is, however, no similarity between the Babylonian and Chinese civilization sufficiently striking to necessitate the assumption of a common origin. The differences are really greater than the resemblances. Nor is migration on a large scale at all likely at a time when no part of the globe was over-populated, when the dangers of a long trek through a wilderness imagination filled with horrible demons and reality with the pangs of thirst and hunger must have staggered the boldest. Only dire necessity could have caused it to be undertaken. Further, the great stress wherewith the paramount duty of children to wait on their parents is insisted on in the early Chinese Classics (the economic aspect of filial piety) rather points to the absence of a subjugated race whose muscles could be exploited for the labour so indispensable in house, farm and garden, and mine.

Climate, soil, and water-supply of Northern China combine to create ideal conditions for the development of human life. Nor does it seem irrational to believe that in the teeming days of creation, when from fire and flood an earth emerged fit to bring forth and nourish organic life, the human species appeared at every point where circumstances were propitious.

The fruitful plains around great rivers, with a mountain range sufficiently near to provide a rampart against invasion, a safe refuge from floods and outbreaks of malaria, seem to have afforded the most favourable ground. To this day centres of civilization thrive most on navigable rivers. Rome, Paris, London, owe much

of their growth and importance to the rivers on which they were founded.

Probably almost simultaneously human settlements arose on the banks of the Nile, the Tigris, the Indus, the Hoang-ho, settlements which were to mature into the earliest and happiest civilizations. The primary ones. For all the others borrowed largely from the fund of knowledge these mighty pioneers were the first to gather. Certain traits they have in common.

Brains are active, visualization clear, the need to communicate and perpetuate thoughts so strong, men are impelled to draw pictures of what they see with their eyes, of what their mind has pieced together. And as these drawings grow ever swifter, ever more condensed and symbolical, with the increasing speed and multiplicity of the ideas they represent, hieroglyphic writing is evolved.

Awe of the mystery of death is not yet attenuated by elaborate descriptions of a future Paradise, nor the sense of the vastness of the Universe and the littleness of man dimmed by a plethora of man-made buildings and contrivances. For this reason infinite piety is shown towards the dead and unquestioning reverence paid to the Unseen Powers, propitiated by freely giving them of the best.

And these early men gaze much at the stars, wondering at their calm magnificence, fixed so high above the clouds, gleaming so far beyond the darkness of earth. They fall down in humble adoration before the splendour of the rising sun, the solemn sadness of its setting behind blue lines of western hills which they fancy must be the final home of all that fades away into silence, sleep, and solitude.

Deeply interested in their own fate, full to overflowing with untried possibilities, dimly realizing the inner oneness of the world, they feel sure their stupendous future must be traced all over it, in the flight of the birds, in the markings of the tortoise-shell, in the movements of the planets. Astrology and divination are not therefore, as now, the secret refuge of the weak and the unhappy, but a serious function of the State.

Quite close still to nature, they do not look on animals as having been created merely for the sport or the service of man. On the contrary, they treat them as his equals, sometimes as his superiors, certainly as mediums through which the divine manifests itself as fully as through the mouth of inspired prophets. Representations of beings half-man half-animal readily shape themselves in their imagination. Egypt, which remained faithful the longest to the totemistic cult of sacred animals, elaborated this conception most; but the Chinese had it too. Fu hi, one of their semi-mythical Emperors, and his sister Nu Kua are represented with fishtails instead of legs, and Sheng Nung, the Patron of Agriculture, is given the head of an ox.

They are fond, too, of the joyfulness of vivid colours, of the delicious smoothness of polished ivory, of pretty shells. Their blood still flows in time with the rhythm of the whole of life, so they break out into dancing, music, poetry; and it is the beneficent work of ploughers, sowers, reapers, not merely the tramp of soldiers, which they lighten and brighten with the cadence of their songs. Chinese folklore contains some breezy ditties, full of the open-air cheerfulness of useful tasks undertaken and achieved in common.

It is just this habit of co-operation in works of peace that made it possible for the dwellers on the Nile, the Euphrates, and the Hoang-ho to rise above the barbarism wherein their neighbours remained steeped. And this habit was forced on them by the imperative need to regulate the floods and channels of the great rivers, a need that could only be met by the united efforts of a thousand willing hands working under recognized leadership towards a common end.

It is not to the warlike tribes, as some modern writers obsessed by the worship of invincible navies and crocodile-jawed howitzers are inclined to think, that civilization owes its origin, but to those who were best fitted by the natural kindliness of their disposition, by some inborn tendency towards the restraint and patience of unselfishness, to co-operate with nature and with each other in such great works of peace as canalization, drainage, domesticating animals. The open-minded, sympathetic, self-controlled type of character has infinitely more capacity than the hard, pugnacious, domineering one for discovering and utilizing the gifts of earth; mainly because he is endowed with an instinct for those spiritual values without which the possession even of untold stores of material wealth debases man below the level of the savage instead of raising him above it.

Genuine civilization is the flower of the happy leisure of abundance and security kept from degenerating into idle luxuriousness by the ever-present need to guard against what in nature is inimical to human welfare. It perishes utterly in the arid dust of the armed camp, where all mental activity is focused on nothing nobler than opportunities for destruction, robbery, violence.

The difference in brain-power between tribes mainly addicted to war and those devoted to the production of wealth by peaceful industry can be measured by the gulf fixed between the wild Sudanese inside his prickly zereba and the ancient Egyptian who invented hieroglyphics, sculptured the Sphinx, and regulated the waters of the Nile; between the predatory Tartar living on dried flesh and fermented milk in miserable felt tents and the ancient Chinese who cast magnificent bronze vessels, wove and embroidered delicate silks, evolved a social system admirably fitted to keep passion controlled by reason, and put down in writing thoughts worth learning by heart to this day.

In the reaction which set in after the lovely eighteenthcentury dreams of Arcadian felicity of universal brotherhood had been cruelly refuted by the atrocities of the French Revolution and the brutalities of Napoleon, too much stress was laid on that view of nature which sees in it mainly a fight for existence, an unending and merciless warfare between competing hungers for food and space. Darwin collected the scientific proofs for this theory, christened it the struggle for life, and launched it on its career as the paramount dogma of modern thought. Wherein it still continues, to the great injury of humanity. For it is only a half-truth, even only a quarter-truth, always treacherous constellations to steer by. The whole truth being that side by side with the clash of interests, the warring of appetites, the competing of essential and artificial needs, nature shows an immense amount of peaceful living and letting live, an abundance of gentle toleration, of active help, of generous devotion the one to the other amongst created beings. Motherlove alone probably exceeds in quantity, permanence, and quiet efficiency all the harsh fighting of rival hungers, the frenzied clash of inherited hatreds, which make such noise and tumult in the world.

The main characteristics which mark off the tribes first developing a civilization from the savages around them are not deeper cunning and greater efficiency in war—at the war-game they are as a matter of fact frequently beaten—but inventiveness and the power of permanent co-operation, itself the result of an inborn tendency towards genuine morality.

Morality and inventiveness, these clearly are the strongest points of the early Chinese. From beautifully polished nephrite blades to south-pointing chariots, one useful invention followed upon another. And they came gradually, allowing ample time for minds to adapt themselves to the resultant changes. So the Chinese were spared the fate of modern civilized man, whose nervous system has been sorely shaken by a mass of new inventions all profoundly modifying daily life, pouring down on him with the swiftness and profusion of a cataract; breaking up old habits, destroying old associations, undermining old beliefs, all in the course of less than three-quarters of a century.

Great at inventive industry, the ancient Chinese are greater still in the field of morality. From the first they show a marked proclivity towards the discussion of ethical problems. How much the moral rules they gradually evolved were the outcome of a kindly, affectionate nature is shown by the immense importance attached to filial piety, to grateful reverence towards the dead. As early as 1200 B.C. asylums for the aged appear to be a fully

recognized institution. Their barbarous neighbours are looked down on with scorn for giving the worst to the old and the weak, feeding them only on what was left over from the strong men's repasts, and failing to observe towards each other the dictates of loyalty, honour, friendship, compassion. All these seem to have been recognized by the Chinese as the indispensable cement for any community which hopes to outlast the casual need of the hour, for they made them both the goal and the basis of the laws regulating the relations of life in the family and in the State. Hence it is not surprising to find them place beyond the threshold of history, in that starry twilight preceding the dawn of chronological records, an era of Heavenly rulers (T'ien huang). This legend is conjured up by a memory grown so sleepy with old age, the outlines of its images are as blurred as those of dreams and even more fantastic. It is the myth of a golden age of innocence; occurring in so many parts of the world, it may well have some remote foundation in fact.

For just as the individual is granted a lovely stage where all the generous impulses of his being are at their height, when there is such a perfect balance between desire and the power of achievement, the ensuing happiness is projected out into the whole world, even so the race may have had a luminous spring-time, when all things were held in common because of their abundance and the modesty of material needs; when there were enough hands to do all the work required, not too few to make it impossible or over-laborious; when there was no thought yet of that scrambling for power and wealth which no calling by the dignified name of stimulating rivalry can raise into anything but an ugly fight—a time when the first

conscious realization of the divine message throbbing in the beauty of the external world, in the day-dreams and passions of the soul, so quickened intelligence, the race, young and strong and full of the zest of life, innocent still of the vices of weariness, of the corruptions of crowded cities, was happy with all the magnificent exuberance of Nature at her sweetest and her best. Laws and customs had as yet erected no harsh barriers between her and human life, nor had the guidance of instinct been superseded by that of reason. And instinct, though it may not lead far, does at least not lead astray. Even the gods were still unborn. Only the glory of the circling stars, the recurring marvel of sunrise and sunset, of the sequence of the seasons, the beckoning lure and mystery of distance, loving faithfulness towards the dead, had begun to thrill the mind with a questioning awe, which the facts of experience could not wholly answer.

What system there was belonged to the matriarchal stage of development. Descent was traced through the mother. Even down into semi-historical times only the mother of the Emperors is mentioned. The fact that the father was unknown, or of no account, is gracefully disguised by legends of miraculous conception. The ecstasy of lovers who feel as though they had broken through the barriers of space and were treading on the gold of infinite stars is mirrored in the following poetic lines about the mother of the great Yü:

"She was called Sew Ke. She saw a falling star which flamed through the constellation Maou, and in a dream her thoughts were stirred and she conceived."

Of the mother of another Emperor it is said:

"She beheld the Yaou Kwang star gleam through

the moon like a rainbow and move towards her in the palace of Yew fang."

Of a third:

"His mother was called New-tsie. She witnessed a star of many colours come floating down the river to the islet of Hwa. Thereafter she dreamed she had received it."

But the heavenly age could not endure. Its very happiness brought about its end. The clan multiplied beyond the limits where affection, the only bond needed within the circle of the family, remains strong enough to counteract the disruptive antagonisms of jealousy and selfishness. From manifold quarrels, bickerings, misunderstandings, laws arose to maintain peace and order. But laws, being merely a substitute for genuine goodness, give rise to opposition, compulsion, evasion, punishment, discontent. The worst wrong they instituted was the depriving the mother of ownership in what so essentially belongs to her, the children to whom she has given birth. This injustice runs like a great rift through the whole edifice of human society. What brought it about is not quite clear. Probably it was war, that great perpetrator of iniquities, which deprived women of all rights of possession, not only of their children, but of their own In inter-tribal raids the males were killed by the victors, the females carried off and kept as slaves. Gradually, for the convenience of men, this slavery was extended in equal or lesser degree to all women alike. Not quickly, however. The very weight of the chains convention has fastened round them proves that they did not give up their original independence without a struggle.

Nor was their position in ancient China nearly as humble as it became later on.

An Empress, the wife of Huang Ti, is said to have instituted the obtaining, weaving, and embroidering of silk.

Women regulated the markets and actively participated in the sacrifices offered in the ancestral temples. The music and poetry of their making was accepted as readily as that of men. As soothsayers and healers they were greatly esteemed. A woman is credited with the invention of the art of painting. There have been remarkable women artists, poets, scholars throughout Chinese history. Even a female minister of State is mentioned in the tenth century B.C. An Empress Dowager ruled mightily, if somewhat ruthlessly, during the T'ang dynasty. There is a legend of a great Queen of the West, Si Wang Mu, from whose lips the famous exploring Emperor, Mu Wang, gathered wisdom, kneeling before her in her Palace of Jade near the Lake of Liquid Jasper.

Further, the mother retained an influence and a power over her sons, such as is not conceded to her anywhere else. A touching petition by one Li Mih has been preserved from the third century A.D., wherein he prays to be excused from accepting the highly honourable post of tutor to the Crown Prince, on the ground that he dare not leave his aged and ailing grandmother.

"Out of pity with my orphaned condition my grandmother adopted me, and tended me with her own hands.

I was very delicate; at nine, still unable to walk. My
family had come down; its fortunes were sadly diminished.

I stood alone in the world, so forsaken, my body had to
seek comfort from its own shadow.

"My grandmother was generally ill and confined to her bed, so that I had to wait on her and nurse her without ever being able to leave her.

"That I, so poor and unworthy, should have been honoured with a call to the Eastern Palace is more than I can requite with my life. . . . Nevertheless I venture to hope I may be permitted to follow the dictates of my private affections. . . .

"May the illustrious dynasty which rules the State according to the principles of filial piety look down on my lonely sorrow with compassionate indulgence.

"It is only because my grandmother is nearing the end of her days, and has scarcely any vitality left. Man's life is so short; in the morning he dare not count on the evening. Without my grandmother I would not have survived to the present day. Without me she could not have fulfilled the number of her years. Indeed, we have preserved each other's life. Therefore I am unable to leave her even for a moment, and dare not abandon her to her fate. Should she be vouchsafed the happiness of ending her days in peace, I vow that as long as I breathe I shall be ready to lay down my life and demonstrate my gratitude even unto death.

"Trembling with fear like a dog or a horse, I respectfully submit this my humble petition."

What European official would jeopardize his career for a grandmother, unless her last will and testament could deprive him of very solid expectations? Even then he probably would only double the number of hired attendants to whose cold ministrations he would relegate her closing days without a moment's hesitation.

Chinese culture, having in this as in many other

matters kept more faithful to primitive society, never wholly divested itself of a certain tinge of femininity, of a femininity not dwelling apart and often in antagonism to masculinity, but woven like a soft silken thread into the very tissue of the life of men. Not only are Chinamen profoundly respectful in manner towards their mother, but they allow an intelligent wife a clear insight into their business affairs, and they frankly cultivate the taste so marked in women for delicate embroideries, beautiful silks, precious stones, exquisite porcelains, the beauties of which are a sealed and despised riddle to the rough barbarians of our schools and colleges. In their restricted horizon hunting and horse-racing, the two things which Lao-Tsze said excited the heart to madness, are the chief amusements considered really worthy of men.

But in China women, though deprived of all legal or social independence, yet succeeded in permeating the whole of life, possibly with some of the weakness, certainly with all the charm and suavity, characteristic of their sex.

It was wonderfully picturesque, this ancient Chinese life; simple, sane, and strong, like everything that grows straight out of the soil over which it is destined to spread. The country was still densely covered with jungle, except where human hands had torn away the brambles to make a clearance for field and dwelling. Monkeys swung about in pliant branches of bamboos. Mammoths, crocodiles, iguanodons crashed about through the tall reeds of lakes and meres; perhaps even dragons. Two are mentioned in written records as having been specially preserved and fed in the royal domain by a

keeper appointed to look after them. Unluckily, one of his charges died, and he pickled it and made a dish of it to set before the king.

The rivers were the highroad for human traffic. Canoes and rafts floated along them, bearing tribute to the great Chief, who, being wise and strong, and toiling early and late for the welfare of many, was already looked on as the Son of Heaven. For obedience and reverence are among the strongest and earliest instincts of the herd, which feels that without a trusted leader it would soon scatter and come to naught among the many perils of an untamed world. The gravest of these were the floods, which periodically devastated acres of lands, swept away in gurgling eddies trees and beasts and men.

It is as a controller of floods, a regulator of rivers, that the tribal chieftain is definitely magnified into the Emperor, the Supreme Chief to whom even distant settlements send tokens of their gratitude and their submission.

The tribute they brought is catalogued somewhat as follows:

Grass cloth and hempen cloth, coarser and finer.

Gold, silver, iron, and copper.

Skins of foxes, jackals, bears, and articles plaited out of their hair.

Ivory, lazulite, cinnabar, cypresses.

Bundles of pomelloes and oranges.

Baskets filled with deep azure and other silken fabrics, chequered and white.

Purple silks, floss silks, raw silks from the mountain mulberry leaf.

Strings of pearls that are not quite round,

Plumage of pheasants.

Grindstones, whetstones, arrow-head stones, musical gem stones.

Strange stones and salt from the shores of the sea.

And cedars and bamboos, large and small, willow for bows, and reeds for musical instruments.

Also the wood of the solitary dryandra, which, growing in the pure air of the hillside, its branches tossed by the wind of countless tempests, its sap surging with the melodies of innumerable springs, was held to impart to the lutes into which it was fashioned the inmost secret of harmony.

There was much playing on lutes, great beating on lizard-skin drums at the gatherings for the spring-sowing and the autumn-harvesting, plentiful whoop and patter of vigorous dancing, posturing, gossiping, commenting in spirited songs on the events of the day, so that probably the noise of whole-hearted merriment largely predominated over musical euphony.

And the smoke of burnt-offerings was pleasant to the nostrils; beneficent spirits and hardworking humans alike partook of the succulent food; the aged and feeble were tenderly waited on; and youths and maidens played the eternal game of falling in love. What was begun there in jest might be continued in earnest. Then the young hunter would, as in duty bound, bring his gift of deer-skins and wild geese to ingratiate himself with the girl's parents. We can picture the mother critically examining the quality of the skins, the plumpness of the birds, while the young man with eloquent eyes and fingers signals to the daughter to meet him in the gloaming on the fringe of the coppice behind the homestead. And

somewhere, squatting outside his wattle-hut in the last rays of the western sun, a very old uncle, in whose brain all the labours and joys and sorrows of many long years were merged in the one delicious sensation of being alive in the light and the warmth of the world. Time meant nothing to him any more. The Emperor might employ his clever magicians to measure it by the movements of the stars, the midday shadows thrown by the sun, even to watch the miraculous bean planted inside the imperial zereba, from the ripening of whose pods they could calculate the passage of a definite number of days. What trouble the great ones of earth took about what mattered so little! Time didn't matter. Time was the same as Eternity, and Eternity was nothing but just this wonderful blissful feeling of being alive-he knew, he knew. So he crooned to himself contentedly in rhythmic cadence with the beat of his wooden stick against the hollowness of a rough earthenware instrument.

From the forest came the sound of the woodcutter's axe. The forest was still very near, very big, very mysterious. Dark, perilous, it stretched across the plain, right up to the mountains, perhaps to the end of the world, if there was an end. The clan needed all the enterprise of its warriors, all the vigilance of its mastiffs, all the cunning of its witches to guard against the malign influences prowling there. For in that green twilight lurked the gleam of cruel eyes, amongst dead leaves the rustle of stealthy footsteps: tigers and wild cats, untameable creatures, herds of pigmies, savages with excessively long arms, head-hunters with perforated breast-bones through which they passed rings of copper, circlets of shells.

Sometimes these wild things would swoop down on the village with the horrible hunger of winter-wolves, to kill and rob and devour.

And sometimes the beacon-fires would flame from hill-top to hill-top, summoning the fighters to the side of their king, bent on carrying out a big battle against marauders grown overbold. For life did then, as it does now, demand all the joy and courage of youth, all the wisdom of old age, all the busy kindliness of mother-hood, to make it the bright, beautiful thing which it can and should be.

But even to the brightest life some time or other death would come. Then there was much grief and anguish in the stricken dwelling. The bereaved would fling themselves on the lifeless body, call to it and try by all their limited means to bring warmth and motion back to its cold limbs—in vain. Then they would go to some high place, wailing towards the sombre North, sobbing towards the sun-steeped South, calling towards the radiant East, crying to the misty West: "Come back, O soul, come back!"

But it would not come back.

For a little while, like a bird just flown from its nest, it would hover round the old home, yearning for its sheltering love, till the joy in the new strength of its wings waxed greater than anything else, more blessed than all it had ever felt before, and, spreading them out wide, clear as a song, sharp as the point of light on the white breast of a swallow, it merged into the blueness of the sky, grew one with the luminous influences that shield the world and protect the fate of man, so he do nothing to offend them.

In some such manner during countless and uncounted years, through blue frost of winter, green warmth of summer, through abundance and famine, through flood and drought, the life of ancient China went its appointed way: laughed and danced, and toiled and dreamed; hunted in the primeval forest; trafficked in the market by the ferry; paddled along lakes and rivers; journeyed by well-worn paths across bridges slung together from desiccated iguanodons and tortoise-shells, or along faint jungle-tracks linking up with the old home the fresh settlements that, one by one, had swarmed out from the mother stock.

For centuries.

Indeed, in this country of deep-seated memories the life of far beginnings has not wholly perished yet.

Gradually it became richer, fuller, more varied and complex.

The wilderness was driven further back, the sound of the woodcutter's axe drifted away into the distance of the hills.

Above the homes of the peasant-folk, not greatly altered from the old wattle-hut, gorgeous palaces arose for the great ones of earth, magnificent temples for the great ones of heaven.

Whereas once it had been a matter of note that a look-out post had been thatched with rushes, Emperors now erected towers of scented cedar-wood, adorned the pavilions of their favourites with panels of carnation-stone, with doors of ivory studded with gems.

Through carefully tilled fields and well drained marsh there went wide stone-paved roads joining one walled city unto another. Along them echoed the swift beat of the hoofs of riders; the thunder of the battle-chariot, with its mailed team and glittering spears; the slow rumble of carts with vermilion shafts, bright-coloured canopy, and merry tinkle of brass bells.

Men on foot walked along them, the young bearing the burdens of the old-scholars with weighty bundle of closely written scrolls; traders, some precious piece of jade or ivory carefully swathed round with silk; peasants driving animals to market or sweating beneath the weight of fruit and vegetables dangling in huge netfuls from the bamboo pole upon their neck; behind noise and fluster of underlings clearing the way for the majesty of Law, some great official borne along in scarlet palanquin, his beads of aquamarine shimmering on the embroidered egret of his robes; in open spaces near the road jugglers, sorcerers, acrobats, girls with their blue kerchiefs fluttering and wide silken sleeves blown out by the breeze. And watching over all this coming and going the Spirits of the City Gates and the Spirits of the Open Road, the gold characters of their sacred names shining out of the wayside temple like some kindly sun of long ago between the soft dusk of vermilion pillars, the lazuli fretwork of beams and eaves richly carved and painted beneath the great curve of the roof.

And there was order on the road and discipline: carriages in the middle; men on the right side; women on the left. "One man kept behind another who had a father's years; followed more closely one who might be his elder brother, but still keeping behind as geese fly one after the other in a row." None of the scrambling and jostling and pushing aside of the weak which characterizes the thoroughfares of our up-to-date cities.

Once a year, in the first month of spring, the imperial herald went along the roads, called for attention with wooden-tongued bell, and proclaimed to all and sundry whom it might concern:

"Ye officers able to direct, be prepared with your admonitions. Ye workmen engaged in mechanical labours, bring forth your grievances. If any of you disrespectfully neglect this requirement, the country has regular punishments for you."

Evidently loyal co-operation between rulers and ruled for the general welfare was always sought for, even if it could not always be achieved.

Gracefully curved bridges of sculptured stone carried the roads across canals and rivers; on the banks silkworm towers, rest-houses; on the waterways brightly painted skiffs with silken awnings, ferries, fishermen's boats, large junks loaded with grain, timber, minerals, all manner of valuable merchandise.

Inside the strong walls and gateways of the town the hammering of many workers in brass, copper, iron, tin; the manifold manipulations of gold and silver, amber, jade, and precious stones by jewellers, bending, setting, chiselling, enamelling; the million stitches of tailors and embroiderers piecing together and beautifying soft furs and robes of brightly coloured silks; the busy plaiting of rushes into baskets, mats, sandals, besides the thousand activities of builders, painters, carpenters, barbers, carriers, cooks, and the countless others who go to make the life of a thriving city. And all this work proceeding with the cheerful placidity of the Oriental, who places his leisure inside his work, not outside it, thereby benefiting both. For haste in labour lands in shoddy; idleness

in leisure, in vulgarity and vice. And shoddy was the one thing it behoved artificers strenuously to avoid. Its production was not then held to be the pleasantly shaded short-cut to wealth and power it is now. Craftsmen were compelled to mark their wares with their names, so that, any failing to reach the proper standard, the offender could be identified and punished. This taught men to deal honestly by their work and by their customers. Adding to this the pleasure which the creation of anything sound naturally calls forth, the foundations were laid for that pride in good workmanship, that cheerfulness during long, unbroken weeks of toil, which the Chinese artisan has not lost yet.

Besides the workshops, the city held taverns, temples, yamens, markets, the sunny houses of the humble, the sumptuous halls of the wealthy, marble courtyards, flowering gardens, lakes and rockeries and bright pavilions, warehouses, schools. For though the family was strong, the Emperor was stronger still, and kept the education of the sons of his nobles and officials jealously in his own hand. With the unfailing instinct of the born ruler, he realized that no government can endure which has not at its beck and call a sufficient number of young men brought up in an atmosphere of unquestioning loyalty to the central authority and adequately trained for the responsibilities of administration and defence.

And it seems to have been real education that was dispensed in those Halls of Bright Harmony, as the old imperial schools were called. Deservedly: a proper balance was kept between the training of the body, the mind, and the emotions, without which balance the full

development of all the good there is in man cannot possibly be achieved.

On the physical side archery headed the list. A public contest once a year gave the necessary stimulus to ambition. The brandishing of the spear, the use of shield and axe, charioteering, and other military exercises, dancing—the dances of peace and the dances of war—strengthened and disciplined the lithe young bodies.

On the mental side, reckoning, reading, writing, which in China is real caligraphy, a fine art requiring the closest co-operation between hand and brain. To moderns, used to the speed, clatter, and soulless dreariness of Remingtons, this may appear sheer waste of time, but it had great advantages. With writing a real art and the process of inscribing elegantly shaped characters on bamboo-tablets or on silk an arduous undertaking, such things only were written down as were worth the effort. There was little temptation to sink into that looseness of thought, that carelessness of diction, which chokes our Press, and is a melancholy, though perhaps inevitable result of cheap and rapid output of written matter.

But the chief discipline of the mind was derived from the learning of history. By history were meant not long lists of dates, of wars, battles, rebellions, executions, but the great ethical principles, the eloquent proclamations of ancient rulers and sages. The young memorizing these, the aspirations of the past were woven into the dreams of the future and the vital heirlooms of tradition duly safeguarded; while, dominating and coordinating the whole scheme of education, careful instruction was given in manners and music. For both these control and evoke emotions, and it is by emotions that the young, especially the young of an artistic race, are swayed the most.

"Music served to give the interior cultivation, the rules of conduct the external.

"The two operating reciprocally within had their outward manifestation, the result being a peaceful serenity, high principles controlling nobility of inward feeling and mild elegance of manners."

Thus the "Li Ki," where so many interesting details are given: "In spring the pupils recite the ballads; in summer they play on the guitar, being taught by the Grand Master in the Hall of the Blind; in autumn they learn ceremonies, being instructed by the Master of Ceremonies in the Hall of the Blind; in winter they read the Book of History in the Upper School, being instructed by the guardians of it."

All the rules about sacrificial offerings, the feasting of the old and the conversation at general gatherings, were taught in the Eastern School by the lower directors of music. The Grand Director delivered the graduated rules relating to speech and the forms of address for requesting the old to utter their wise counsels. The Grand Perfecter lectured on these points in the Eastern School.

A regular decalogue of table manners is also given:

- "Do not roll rice into a ball.
- "Do not bolt roast meat in large pieces.
- "Do not swill down the soup or the sauces.
- "Do not make a noise in eating.
- "Do not crunch bones with the teeth.
- "Do not put back fish you have been eating.
- "Do not throw the bones to the dogs.

- "Do not snatch at what you want.
- "Do not spread out the rice to cool.
- "Do not keep picking the teeth."

To our rough plutocracies, whose impulsive optimism fancies manners can be dispensed with, this insistence on their value by the longest-lived nation of the world may well give food for thought.

Like Plato later on, the ancient Chinese realized the educational value of music. It was used to accompany dancing, to honour the spirits, to kindle military ardour, to welcome guests, to soothe sorrow, to link up human life with the deep rhythm of the Universe.

When it is said that the tinklings of the jade stones pendent from the ruler's cap and girdle kept evil thoughts from entering his mind, some superstitious belief in the power of sound to ward off malignant influences seems to come into play, yet, as often happens, there is an undercurrent of truth in the superstitious fancy. When some warm summer draught sways the brightly enamelled ornaments dangling from coloured lanterns, or when a soft wind stirs all the little bells of ancient temple eaves into sweet melodiousness, what discordant thoughts will not take flight, what irritation will not be appeased, shamed by such gentle music?

The imitation of thunder, itself identified with the mighty voice of Heaven, was said to have been the origin of music. But that could only apply to the roll of drums, the rumble of gongs, the percussion of great bells. The mellow notes of the lute, the rippling arpeggios of the harp, can scarcely have had so tempestuous a birth. Their source lies deep down in the emotions of the soul, as the Chinese with their

extreme sensitiveness to all spiritual values were the first to realize. To them that twin sister of Music, Poetry, was the product of earnest thought, its prolonged utterance was song.

"Man sings because a thought moves him, weeps because his heart is stirred.

"Music is something that has gathered within him and needs must overflow into outward expression."

So wrote Han Yü, an ardent admirer of Confucius.

Po Chü-I, another poet of the same incomparable T'ang period, describes how through all the dreaminess of a moonlit autumn night spent on the banks of a river in some far place of exile, he listened to the music of a lute played by a lonely woman, how her

plectrum led to prayer the cloistered chords, Now loudly with the crash of falling rain, Now soft as whispered words 'neath summer leaves, Now loud and soft together as the long Patter of pearls and seed-pearls on a dish Of milk-white jade.¹

And the song grew so sad, so soft, he wept "until the pale chrysanthemums upon his darkened robe were starred with dew."

K'ung-fu-tsze himself, in the disappointed loneliness which is the usual fate of the wise born in an age of political folly, found solace, singing to the accompaniment of his lute the simple ballads, mellow with age, rich with the freshness of the springtime of the race, which he had rescued from oblivion.

These songs were not all sad, nor did music serve only
¹ L. Cranmer-Byng: A Lute of Jade.

as an outlet for individual emotion. As an incentive or accompaniment to dancing, marching, revelling, in cadence with reaping and harvesting, with the hoisting of sails, the pulling of oars, it fostered that spirit of comradeship, that cheery concord, without which the joint actions of men, whether for pleasure, profit, or danger, grow lifeless, hard, mechanical.

A delightful picture of Chinese conviviality is sketched by Wang Hi-chi, a gifted prose-writer of the fourth century:

"In the ninth year of the reign of Yung-huo, about the beginning of the third moon, we met in the Orchid Pavilion near Shan Yin, on Mount Kuei-ki, to celebrate the festival of the warding off of evil influences. The company was numerous, the scenery gorgeous. High peaks, precipitous mountain-ranges, luxuriant forests, lofty bamboos. Limpid brooks and bubbling rivulets suggested the game of the floating goblets.

"So we all sat down at our proper places, and though neither lutes nor reed-pipes beautified the feast, bright songs following on each goblet, we all gave full vent to our gladness. The sky was cloudless, the air pure, a delicious breeze wafted coolness. Gazing upwards, we contemplated the immensity of the Universe; looking down, the abundance and variety of Creation. Merely allowing thought and vision to roam about at pleasure filled eyes and ears with infinite delight."

¹ The players sat down separately at suitable distances from each other, on either side of the winding banks of a rivulet. Goblets filled with wine were placed on lotus leaves, which the current carried down. Every player near whom a goblet landed had to drink it and improvise a song.

In a similar strain, though many centuries later, well towards the end of the days of ancient Chinese glory under the Sung dynasty, the poet and brilliant essayist Su-Tung-p'o painted the following idyll:

"In the fall of the year, on the sixteenth day of the seventh moon, I went boating with some friends to the Red Wall. A cool breeze just ruffled the limpid waters, and we passed the wine round to the strains of the 'Melodies to the Bright Moon' and of the 'Ballad of the Modest Maiden.'

"Presently the moon rose above the eastern hills, gliding up between the Wain and the Goat. A white mist floated over the river, and the glimmer of the water merged with that of the sky.

"We let the boat drift downstream like a rudderless reed. The liquid surface seemed to stretch into infinitude. As though borne by the wind through endless space, as though lifted on enchanted wings, away from earth into mystic solitude, we felt like reaching the very seats of the gods.

"Joyously we gave ourselves up to merriment, drinking and singing in time with the dip of the oars and to the accompaniment of a bamboo flute. Its notes rang out clear as the song of birds, luring, caressing, plaintive, defiant, soft, elusive, long-drawn-out like silken threads of gossamer. They roused the dragons in their sombre glens, moved the forsaken woman in her lonely skiff to piteous tears. Profoundly moved myself, I asked my friend the meaning of his song.

"He answered:

^{&#}x27;The stars grow pale, the moon gleams bright, Black ravens southwards wing their flight.

"'That was the song of Ts'ao Ts'ao, the hero of his day. Where is he now? And you and I, who fished and gathered firewood on the banks of the river, are we more than the companions of fishes and molluscs, the associates of elk and deer? Here we sit in a frail canoe, adrift like a leaf; we pass round the flagon, insects of a day buzzing for a brief span between earth and heaven, grains of rice on the boundless sea. Alas for the shortness of our days! O that they were inexhaustible, like the flow of the river; that with winged angels I might fly through the empyrean, stay the moon in her course, and thus prolong the duration of life. Too well I know this to be impossible, and that I can do nothing but pour out on the pitying wind the helpless yearning of my song.'

"'Oh friends,' I said, 'do you not understand the nature of the water and the moon? Constantly the river flows away, yet it never decreases. Forever the moon waxes and wanes, yet it never alters. Judged by their mutability, heaven and earth do not endure a moment; judged by their permanence, all external things, and we too, are wholly immortal. What more can we desire?

"'Further, in heaven and earth each thing has its owner. What is not truly mine, were it only a wisp of hair, that I never can possess. But the cool breeze blowing over the river, the clear moon gleaming between the mountain summits—the ear catches the one and transmutes it into sound, the eye seizes the other and turns it into a picture. What we thus appropriate is ours absolutely, its enjoyment endless.

"'It is the inexhaustible treasure-store of Him who

created the myriad things, the perfect happiness wherein we all can share alike.'

"My friends smiled. To the brim we refilled the freshly rinsed goblets, and when we had finished our frugal repast of fruit and meat, cups and plates empty and littered about, we lay down close together in the bottom of the boat, and never noticed the dawn of a new day stealing over the eastern horizon."

In such healthy pleasures, drawn straight from magnificent scenery, the gift of a bountiful sky still unsullied by the foulness of smoke-belching factories, much of the leisure of ancient China slipped away, clear as the bubbling rivulets along which rippled the joyous music of its songs, sweet as the perfume of its flowers, bright as the tissue of its silks. For though there was endless labour in the fields, strenuous toil in study, mine, and workshop, prolonged mourning for those one had loved so intensely, also much of the deep melancholy of minds haunted by the vision of unattainable ideals, yet the dominant note was happiness—the happiness of united families, of loyal friends, of honest citizens, of high-principled men and women in vital touch with the wealth, the beauty, the holiness of human existence. Even now, after such a prolonged period of misrule, rebellion and humiliation, the Chinese people are full of laughter, of delight in fireworks, kites, crackers, in gaily painted lanterns, in little goldfish darting round in shining globes of glass and water. Through all their trials they have preserved their genius for decorationsdecorations graceful, fantastic, elegant, humorous, grotesque, always bright and pleasing, and never the exclusive privilege of the wealthy. The deadening influence of

machine-made shoddy, which has robbed the daily life of the poor in Europe and America of every vestige of artistic beauty, has not yet had time in China to slay this happy instinct, so fully developed in the proud days of her freedom.

Days during which century by century the Sons of Han built up their civilization on the early Cyclopean foundations. Where there had been ignorance they put learning, refinement where there had been roughness, art where there had been simplicity. And a world arose of such manifold beauty, wit, affluence, there was a danger of forgetting that beneath all this abundance of goldengrained harvests, this luxuriant blossoming of fragrant flower and delicious fruit, the old hard rocks persisted; that beyond the splendidly cultivated fields the wilderness lay waiting—the wilderness and the grey desert, ever ready to hurl the hunger of their devastating sandstorms over the accumulated fruitfulness of centuries of toil. For while the Middle Kingdom had made such a marvellous growth in power, wealth, and culture, the wilderness had grown, too, in numbers, in desires, in organization. And whereas to the Chinese, deeply engrossed with art, literature, erudition, trade, and industry, life was vibrant with varied interests without the brutal stimulant of war, the thicker skull of the Tartar found time heavy on his hands if he failed to relieve the monotony of his rough tent-life by an occasional indulgence in the barbarian's stupid lust of killing.

Besides, the wealth accumulated by Chinese intelligence and industry dangled a prize worth fighting for in front of the covetous eyes of less civilized races. For hundreds of miles, rising from the narrow plain of the

coast, at the Gate of Hill and Sea, over mountain-spur and mountain-pass, an Emperor raised the defence of the Great Wall against the armed brigandage seething on China's northern boundary. Built with the sweat of millions, with its precipitous sides, its crenellated summit, its towers, gates and bastions, it drew a gigantic line sharp and clear for all to see between the thine and the mine; gave to each the portion belonging to Chinese and Tartar from time immemorial.

For a while it succeeded.

But lines of right and justice, even when marked in so concrete a manner, have never yet, and perhaps never will withhold cupidity from trying to snatch at the riches it desires and is too lazy or stupid to produce itself, not great enough to do without. Already under the Han, and increasingly so under the T'ang dynasty, the protection afforded by the Great Wall had to be supplemented by military expeditions to repel the growing pressure on the borders.

It is a disquieting sign that this vital task of defence was not felt as a stimulant to resolute action, as a difficulty to be overcome by unflagging energy, but as a heavy burden to be borne with what patience one could muster. If European poets sin by disguising the monstrous abominations of war beneath tinsel labels of an obtuse patriotism and costly fireworks of military exploits, Chinese poets of the T'ang period sympathize so much with the home-sickness of soldiers torn from the happy beauty of their native village to march against a cruel foe, or to drag out weary years of exile in lonely frontier-posts, they forget to sustain them with the inspiring thought that their

bodies were making a live barrier more formidable than all the brick and stone of the Great Wall, between the beloved home of their parents, wives, and children and the pitiless hoofs of the invader. Small wonder that at last the fateful hour struck when this spiritless defence collapsed altogether, and the myriad people between the four seas had to submit to the odious tyranny of foreign rule.

But the sunshine of to-day rarely troubles about the tempests of to-morrow. Till well into the thirteenth century the bulk of the people, untroubled by an alarmist Press, were so busy ploughing, painting, picnicking, praying, playing, carving, trading, weaving, that, having committed the care of the household to the kindly spirits of their ancestors, they lay down each night in the sure belief the sun would rise in the morning over the same happy, prosperous China over which it had set the evening before.

Perhaps they were right in their simple confidence, justified in their complete devotion to the work of the hour; for though many histories seem to be written in the barrack-square, so full are they of the tramp of soldiers, the roll of drums, the flutter of torn or of triumphant banners, the things mankind really cherishes as treasures wherewith to beautify the palaces of the rich, the museums for the instruction of the young and the delight of the learned, are not the blood-stained relics of battlefields, where some hard-eyed conqueror decided by which set of exploiters a people should be administered, but the lovely pictures painted by artists in the mellow peace of a mind in touch with the inner mystery of life; the ivories sculptured in the patch of sunlight of some little

Eastern workshop; the missal illuminated in the holy silence of a cell, where all striving and fighting is known to be foolishness, except the supreme struggle to overcome the evil in one's own heart. It was to the creation of these permanent values that Chinese thought tended as soon as the hard pioneer work of the beginning was completed.

There befell stormy interludes of wars, tyrannies, revolts, as wars, oppressions, and strikes happen now, but these were the sporadic explosions of evil ferments, not the normal state of the country, which on the whole was one of healthy, peaceful, and well-nigh uninterrupted Wherefore the tribe of hardy tamers of the wilderness safely evolved into a race of scholars, poets, artists, drawing support and encouragement from a solid multitude of peasants, merchants, artisans. And over them all, guiding, helping, restraining, rewarding, in solemn procession, the people's rulers, the long line of Emperors in slowly changing dynasties. They pass on the far sky-line of human history, neither with the frown of war-lords, nor the sinister leer of the despot, nor the oleogravure smile of the constitutional monarch, but with the worshipper's wide, open gesture of surrender to the will of Heaven, whose blessing he implores that he may transmit it to the people entrusted to his care. For the sovereign in China was not merely ruler by the grace of God, as every ruler should be; he was honoured as the Son of Heaven, the High Priest of the nation, who alone was entitled to approach the mysterious Powers of Heaven and Earth with sacrifice and supplication. And what was held to qualify him for this sacred function was not gorgeousness of apparel, splendour of retinue,

magnificence of palaces, but a single and pure heart, a spirit cleansed from all desire, brought into union with the Divine by fasting and solemn vigil through the starry silence of the night. Nor did the Chinese realize the divine in the shape of some horrible Hiuchilobo feasting on the hearts of prisoners of war, of some bloodthirsty Mars rejoicing in destruction and striking terror into victim and devotee alike. The spirit of life, intelligence, harmony as revealed in the conscience of man, in the majestic order of nature, so changeless in the midst of changes, so just, so loving, so benign in the midst of such stern necessity, that was the aspect under which they conceived the Everlasting. Owing to the fundamental sanity, the sterling honesty and kindliness of their temperament, the Chinese instinctively love peace and the works of peace, and prefer producing their own wealth and industry to organizing predatory by thrift armies or piratical navies in order to gain control over the wealth of others. Consequently their early Emperors have not impressed tradition as mighty warriors famous for the number of scalps hanging from their belts, the quantity of ears lopped off from vanquished foes and presented in all the naked savagery, the dripping blood-guiltiness of war trophies at the Pi Yung, the tribal hall.

What has caused their names to be saved from the great forgetting that befalls so much and so many is their contribution towards progress in the arts of civilization, such as writing, healing, music, fixing the measures of time and space. Men dwell only on that for which they have a natural affinity. The rest is dropped out as uninteresting. No doubt those pioneer rulers had to

use strong measures to weld all the clans into a compact whole. Nevertheless the number of boomerangs at their beck and call was far from being the real basis of an overlordship in its essence founded on spiritual claims, on the mandate of Heaven, and attracting loyalty not through degrading motives of fear, but from the ennobling impulse of reverence. And this reverence was directed less towards the Emperor than towards the Power above the Emperor, above all men, above all nature—the great Presence felt as a stedfast, undying principle behind those fluctuating phenomena of the visible world which we call reality; a Spirit-Presence whose laws could be traced in the movements of the stars, in the sequence of the seasons, in the causal connection of events, and above all could be felt in the aspirations of man's conscience towards righteousness, justice, and compassion.

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CHAPTER III

THE original rallying-point of those tribes which were to form the nucleus of the Chinese nation may well have been religious—some Delphic oracle grown up near the tomb of a famous chieftain or around a spot favourably situated for a mart, where a medicine-man of more arresting personality than the others interceded with the spirits of Heaven and Earth and was appealed to for settling disputes, healing the sick, divining future events.

Fu Hsi, the very first Emperor with some claim to chronological existence, is believed to have invented those strange eight trigrams (Pa Kua) held mystically to contain the essence of all knowledge. Knowledge, of course, is far more difficult to acquire, or to reduce to compact form, than the enthusiasm of early thinkers imagined. However, those weird figures, with their dazzling groupings of whole and of broken lines representing the active bright male and the passive dark female principles which, according to Chinese metaphysics, permeate the entire Universe, must have had a strongly hypnotic effect and proved a valuable aid to clairvoyance. And as long as the store of verified facts is infinitesimally small, clairvoyance plays a big part in life, and probably is of some real use.

Wên-Wang, whose son became the founder of the

Chou dynasty, greatly contributed to the popularity of his house by compiling a volume of occult lore on Fu Hsi's symbols. He wrote it while kept in prison by Chou Hsin, the tyrant Emperor detested for his irreverence. A certain mystic Vermilion Book is also mentioned as having been delivered to him by supernatural means. All which helped to spread that aura of sanctity round his clan which the black-haired people looked for in the chosen Son of Heaven.

Two others of those remote sovereigns, so remote that beside them the Chou rulers almost appear modern—Sheng Nung, deified as the Inventor of Agriculture, and Huang Ti, the great Yellow Emperor, the builder of towns, the maker of roads, the inventor of carts, boats, musical instruments—are said to have written books on medicine. This might well be taken as proof that the medicine-man actually is the lineal ancestor of the Chinese Emperor.

Possibly his healings owed what success they achieved more to the faith of the patient than to the skill of the practitioner. But to base kingship on the gift of healing, on the power of abolishing sickness, of relieving suffering, is a wondrously beautiful idea.

The Chinese have often been called cruel. Having suffered the dire calamity of two foreign conquests, it would not be surprising if they had become so; but their original bias was wholly one of profound veneration for the life-giving and life-preserving principle in the world. Their sacred bird, the phænix, was believed not to eat any living insect, nor even to tread on living grass. "The righteous man could not bear to witness the killing of animals he had seen alive, nor, having

heard their dying cries, partake of their flesh." The path before the Son of Heaven was carefully swept, lest inadvertently he might step on some small creature and destroy life.

Shun, one of the three model Emperors, was called to the Dragon Throne entirely on account of his reputation for loving-kindness, for his patience under the ill-treatment inflicted on him by his father, his brother, and his stepmother, and for his success in gently guiding them to a better understanding.

"Let me be reverent, let me be reverent," is his constant prayer; his order: "Let compassion rule in punishment."

Judges were to exert their intelligence to the utmost and give fullest play to their generous and loving feelings.

It was not so much the drunkenness and general dissoluteness of Chou-Hsin's court as the ferocity of the punishments he devised that caused his downfall. The conscience of his subjects revolted against men being condemned to carry pieces of red-hot metal or to climb a copper pillar greased all over and laid across a pit of burning charcoal. When he actually tore out the heart of one of his victims, a piece of cruelty which formed part of the regular religious service of the Mexicans at a much later age, they could stand no more and rose up against him. For they expected spiritual even more than political guidance from their paramount ruler, and would yield obedience only where they also could honour and respect.

Indeed, the whole character of the early Emperors is pontifical. Their speeches and edicts are almost ser-

mons, eloquent with a religion of the highest morality. Their demeanour is grave and dignified; the cut and colour of their clothes as full of occult meaning as those of an officiating Pope. Even the shape and size of their eating-bowl and drinking-cup have mystic significance, and are changed in harmony with the rhythm of the seasons:

"In spring the Son of Heaven wears green robes and pendants of green jade on cap and girdle. The vessels which he uses are slightly carved, to resemble the shooting forth of plants.

"In summer they are tall, to resemble the large growth of things, and the Emperor is robed in red; his jewels are fashioned of carnation jade.

"In autumn he wears white with white jade pendants. The vessels which he uses are rectangular, and going on to be deep, to resemble the depth of the earth, to which things now begin to return.

"In winter they are large and very deep, and the Emperor's robes are black, the gems he wears of darkhued jade.

"In years of drought and famine he wears plain white linen robes, rides in an unadorned carriage, and has no music at his meals. Neither are his meals as full as in good times."

And what these solemn Emperors guarded most jealously was their monopoly of sacrificing to the Spirits of Heaven and of Earth, and their right of fixing the months of the year and its beginning. This was effected by careful astronomical observations, which gave them the power of marking the auspicious and the inauspicious days—a privilege of considerable importance in pre-scientific

society, when no one dared undertake anything without feeling sure luck sanctioned the enterprise.

But they did not only claim privileges. Their conception of kingship was so true, they realized that a monopoly of rights soon becomes intolerable unless balanced by a monopoly of responsibilities and onerous duties. T'ang, the great founder of the Shang dynasty (1766-53 B.C.), has in this respect set an example shining with the light of a radiant star through all the imperfections of the following ages.

Famine was in the great bright land. And its brightness was not that of flowers—it was that of steel consumed in a furnace of unquenchable flames. In a brazen sky, from week to week, from month to month, undimmed by a single cloud, the sun burned down on the parched land. The soil gaped open in huge cracks; grass and corn perished down to their roots.

The very bowels of the earth dried up. Strong oaks turned brown, shrivelled, wilted, withered away.

Now and again sandstorms hurled in their whirling clouds of dust, smothered the parched country-side in yet more stifling desolation.

The kindly spirits of hills and rivers all seemed to have fled away—the entire world to be dropping into death and dust.

All the reserve stocks were exhausted. The drought had lasted through so many summers. For six years the black-haired people had endured privation and hunger—those who could endure. The others starved and were wiped out.

Prayers, incantations, sacrifices, offerings of jade and silk were powerless. And people grew afraid, hid away

in caves and holes in the ground, because of rumours that mayhap a human victim was required.

Then T'ang, the Son of Heaven, came forth out of his palace. His lips were white, his eyes dark and sunken from fasting and from anxious vigil.

He had caused all his riches, the whole wealth of his mint, to be distributed among the needy; and still the misery grew, vaster than all the treasure in the land.

Now his hands were empty, but his heart was full—full of a great love for the destitute, of a great pity for their suffering.

"It is for the people," he said, "that rain must be implored from Heaven. If for this a man must be a victim, I will be he."

And he cut off his hair and his nails, and in a plain carriage drawn by white horses, clad in white rushes in the guise of a sacrificial victim, he set forth to the dim shade of the sacred grove of mulberry-trees.

Nine times he prostrated himself there, bruising his forehead on the hard ground, and from the depth of his whole being he prayed to the Supreme Ruler of the World:

"I do not know but that I have offended. The examination of this is with Thy mind, O God. If guilt is found among the people of the myriad regions, let it rest on me alone. If guilt is found in me, the One Man, let it not be visited on the people!"

And, behold, before his prayer was quite ended clouds gathered and bounteous rain fell down in streams. Attainment seldom fails where the will is set to endure even unto the uttermost.

Once before, this truly royal sovereign had said:

"The good in my subjects I will not dare conceal; for the evil in me, not dare forgive myself."

Men he treated with generous benevolence, animals with tender kindness. At his court he enforced an almost puritanical gravity, warning his grandees:

"You are bewitched, if you dare have constant dancing in your palaces and drunken singing in your chambers; dissolute, if you dare set your hearts on wealth and women and abandon yourselves to roaming about or hunting; disordered, if you dare contemn the words of sages, resist the upright, neglect the aged and the virtuous. Such evil ways will surely bring your family to ruin."

They nearly ruined his grandson, Tai Kia, who followed him on the newly conquered throne. He was young; the blood in him still unsubdued. Power is a heady drink even for matured men, and some reaction after the stern discipline of his grandfather's solemn court was natural, considering the proneness of human nature to slide back.

Singing, dancing, the rippling laughter of delicious women, the gaiety of youthful companions, the glorious recklessness engendered by many cups of most exhilarating wine, these things surely were worth more than elaborate ceremonies to invisible spirits, than dreary audiences at break of day with grey-headed ministers full of reports of troubles, of statements of difficulties and long-winded recommendations thereon. So the ceremonies grew fewer, the audiences shorter; ever more numerous the days of hunting, ever longer the nights of revelry. And the sentries at the Gate of Gems began to drop asleep on duty, the streets in the capital to remain

unswept, the peasants in the fields and the soldiers at the far danger-posts of the Empire to murmur, for the thousand tongues ever ready to speak evil of those in high places soon made it known how the Son of Heaven spent his time in costly dalliance, unheedful of how strenuously his subjects had to sweat and toil. And all the spreaders of corruption who had fared so sumptuously under the last dynasty, and whom T'ang had driven back into obscurity, raised their heads again and strutted about in the broad light of day. The wise and honourable grew silent and retired. All but I Yin, the chief minister of the dead and of the living sovereign.

He remonstrated—gently at first, when Tai Kia only laughed; firmly, and still Tai Kia merely laughed; then sternly and importunately, and again Tai Kia merely laughed. But I Yin noticed there was a hollow sound in the heart of the laughter and the glint of something hard and angry in the brightness of the eyes; saw, and knew. The wall which from ignorance, heedlessness, laziness men allow to grow up between their own soul and the great soul of the world, without whose vitalizing breath the strongest even and the richest must sink into disease and death, was beginning to show its ugly outlines in this heart also.

But it was young. The sapling that threatens to grow crooked can be bent straight by binding it to something firm. Evil can be stamped out if checked before it has become rooted as a habit.

Now, I Yin was not only a man of high principles, but of great courage; and courage, much courage, is needed to carry high principles from the domain of theory, where they are easy and applauded by the multitude, to that of practice, where they are difficult and fiercely persecuted by the self-same crowd. He faced blame, abuse, misunderstanding, his sovereign's revenge, took his measures with all the swiftness and precision of one used to action, and caused Tai Kia to be removed from the pomp and glitter of the palace which were poisoning his mind, and exiled to the place of sorrow, the mortuary temple near the dead monarch's tomb. There he bade him dwell, that, thinking mournfully day and night, he should arouse all the good that was in him—in solitude and meditation realize that the Heaven-conferred seat is a place of difficulty wherein he must fail unless he gathered enough inward strength to prove himself worthy of so great a trust.

Solitude and meditation-English parents, when faced with the problem of dealing with too hot-blooded a son, ship him off to some far colony. They know he will be thrown together with evil companions, knock up against temptations far greater than those to which he had succumbed at home, but they rely on the roughness of the life, the strenuousness of the work, to pull him through -which does happen sometimes, not always. The graves of the exiled black sheep who die somewhere away from home of fever, drink, despair, have never yet been numbered. At best the process of pulling through is a hardening one. The man it makes is coarser, fiercer than the foolish youth banished to retrieve himself. But as long as he achieves a certain measure of material success, who cares, although the good in him be withered and his whole life done and ended the moment his last will is proved?

Solitude and meditation—it is the Eastern remedy

for the shortcomings of a man's inner life, a remedy that dates back to the time when man stood alone between heaven and earth, and had nothing to guide him but the strength of the spirit that was in him; no books stored with the knowledge and experience of former generations; no multiplicity of occupations, distractions, possibilities; barely enough words and sounds wherewith to give utterance to the thoughts that thronged his brain. He was lost for ever if he found no means to cradle his weakness on the infinite powers outside him, if he failed to people his loneliness with the divine presences, the eternal harmonies which the great bright sky and the kind dark earth are perpetually pouring forth to give strength and joy to all who have the eyes wherewith to see, the ears wherewith to hear.

It was on these influences that I Yin relied to arrest Tai Kia's degradation—on these, and on what of inspiring example, of solemn reproach, would arise out of the tomb of the great T'ang to stir within his grandson's blood.

Solitude and meditation—they are strong medicines.

Our hurried city populations, who read some expensively bound book of conventionalized piety at night to go to sleep on, the lies and sensationalisms of the Yellow Press and the Jingo Press morning, noon, and evening, gathering what spiritual guidance they can from this peculiar mixture, might well do worse than periodically to dwell alone with sky and earth and death.

Solitude and meditation—solitude away from the gay lights, the thousand sights of the capital, from its music, its pageants, its busy throngs at work or at play, away even from the gentle hum of village life. Solitude in the vast enclosure of the temple, its green trees, its pink walls, and its white steps mirrored in the monotonously murmuring river, each day the same, except in winter when the river froze, and even that small sound was crushed in the stupendous silence of the ultimate world.

Meditation before the stone-cold altar with its massive vessels of polished bronze, before the tablet inscribed with a dead man's name; meditation in sight of the gloomy mound behind whose greenness or whose withered grass one felt the coffin and the crumbling bones.

Tai Kia thought he would go mad—felt as if he must tear that silence with the whole might of his screams, destroy that solitude with every demon of his rage.

He hardly knew which was most terrible to bear, the endless day or the interminable night. The one brought the frenzy of desire for all the joys from which he had been torn; the other, the cruel mockery of dreams, which changed the splash of raindrops on the bare, paved court-yard into the patter of soft feet, the swish of autumn foliage against the windows into the rustle of silk skirts, the passing of the wind across his forehead into the breath of living beings. Then his strong young blood would surge up within him, drench his hair in perspiration, fling his hands in savage wrath against the walls of what seemed to them a prison.

But it was not a prison; only the gate to the illimitable Reality which his narrow world of selfish power and pleasure had kept hidden from him. He did not understand all at once. For months he arose in the morning heavy and tired from a sleep too full of dreams, dragged the bitterness of his thoughts from the black of night into the glare of day. He would push away his morning meal and gaze listlessly towards the sky, bounded on all sides by walls and yew-trees and the outline of a grave. Pigeons would flutter down close to his mat, hoping for some grains of millet. And his dog would come and lay a big paw across his sleeve, asking for kindness. In mere idleness he spoke to them, taught them to take the food out of his hand. But he learnt something from the simple trust which gleamed at him out of the watchful depths of their bright eyes; something of the unity of all conscious life and of the magic touch of sympathy.

And something he learnt from the river in its even lapping, made up of a myriad multiplicity of waves, each wave part of the polished crystal which, though so narrow, yet could mirror the vast vault of heaven, the sun, the moon, and all the glowing constellations rising upwards from dewy vagueness of the east. Something of the happiness of vision and of the nearness of even the remotest star.

And something he learnt from the changes of the seasons, from the many sounds and all the silences of soil and sky; something of the absoluteness of law, of the restful calm of fate, till the cruelty of individual desires waned and faded from his consciousness and the might and the music of the Universal began to pour through it instead in wonderful vibrations—till gradually small things even ceased to be dull and colourless, came to shine with the light of some great purpose, some magnificent design, some eternal movement. And one winter night, when moonbeams wove sheets of liquid silver over frozen river and marble court, when the massive sacrificial vessels cast dark blue shadows on the ground and above jet-black

yew-trees, only a few stars gleamed from the peace and the depth of ineffable space, then at last the hidden meaning of the world grew articulate in him, and in the sacred presence of the dead he understood the goal of life. Which is not lust for selfish pleasure, but the seeking for divine serenity; not unrestrained indulgence in every passion of the hour, or brutal pride of power in dominating over others, but humble bending of the will towards discipline of self, towards utmost loyalty of labour on some task in harmony with Heaven's wondrous purposes. At birth, to each man a fragment of such task was given; at death, from each man it will be asked in what manner he achieved it. And as Tai Kia paced the open court, emptied of all things but the silver silence of the moon, former events fell into their appointed places and proportions. He began to remember all he had been told about Chieh, the evil tyrant from whose unhallowed hands the mandate of Heaven had passed away; how he had been young and strong and talented, even as he was, and had received the proud inheritance of the Dragon Throne as a free gift of his birth, even as he had; how to him it meant nothing but an opportunity for gratifying his appetites, pandering to his lusts until these became so powerful they were the real Emperor, and, natural pleasures fallen savourless from excessive frequency, all manner of vices had to whip them back to animation. Whereby his youth and strength were prematurely smitten with repulsive senility and all his talents foundered in a sodden lethargy.

And then Tai Kia remembered what a wondrous peace had filled the room where his grandfather was stretched out in the rich robes of longevity, the saintly face and the quiet hands gleaming like sculptured ivory out of the soft folds of the silk; how he himself could hardly bear to rise up from his knees, for he felt that kneeling was the only seemly attitude in the presence of the dead; how when the palace halls were full of wailing and the heart within him unhappy and sore, his mother had drawn him aside and said: "Sorrow is only the black entrance-gate of Death; when that is passed, all within is light and gold."

Never till now had he understood her meaning, now that the gold of a great truth came to him out of a grave and the light of a great resolve from the spirit-presence of the dead. If he misspent his life, how would he ever dare to face the end? If he starved his soul, in what guise would he last beyond his little span of mortal days?

Should his reign be such that those who came hereafter, when they brought incense to his grandfather's tomb, letting rank nettles grow on his, could say of him: "He was unworthy to be king; too weak even to rule himself."

To be worthy of the illustrious dead, to scatter wealth and happiness on others, keeping for himself the purer wealth of a generous heart, the more enduring happiness of magnanimity and righteousness, was this not better far than the glitter of a thousand feasts, than the glamour of all sensual love?

And the night grew deep and solemn like a prayer; moon and stars, and earth and death and the young sweet life within him, glowed and throbbed together in perfect harmony at last.

When, soon after, I Yin came to Tai Kia in the lonely

river temple, he knelt down before him, his face in his hands and his head to the ground, and caused the imperial cap and the imperial robes to be brought to his young master, who, by solitude, suffering, and meditation, had earned the right to wear them.

Thus sumptuously arrayed, with music of bells and beating of drums, waving of banners, acclamations of festive crowds, Tai Kia was welcomed back to the capital.

He never broke his high resolves. And his people said of him: "How single and pure is the heart of the King."

He governed wisely and had good sons. But sometimes, amidst all the stir and splendour of the palace, he would long for the silent temple with its green trees, and its pink walls, and its white steps each day mirrored in the monotonously murmuring river till winter, when the waters froze and even their small voice was hushed in the stupendous silence of the ultimate world.

At his death he was called Tai-tsung, that is, Great Master, for he had done a nobler thing than the conquering of others—he had conquered himself.

The same aura of intense spirituality gleams round Woo Ting, the most famous of T'ang's later successors. He spent the season of sorrow in the mourning shed, wearing the hempen garments of bereavement, his pillow a clod, his drink only water, silently lost in meditation, all the delights of the senses put right from him, life disburdened of everything that could clog his soul in its communion with the spirit of his dead father and the immortal forces of the Unseen.

When the period of mourning was over-three whole

years—he still kept silence. To his ministers' anxious questions he would give no answer, but remained speechless, wrapped in thought. His soul had leant out so far into the Infinite he could not at once draw it back to one small point of time and space, nor suddenly restrain its boundless freedom in the imprisonment of uttered words. But on his ministers urging him: "If His Majesty do not speak, in what way shall we receive his orders?" he wrote on his ivory tablet:

"As it falls on me to secure right in the four quarters, I have been sore afraid that my virtue is not equal to so great a task. Therefore I have not spoken. But while I was reverently and silently meditating on the Way, God in a dream showed me the helper who should speak for me."

And he drew a picture of the man of whom he had dreamt—a man strong in simple honesty, with eyes of penetrating insight, with lips of firm resolve. His garment was made of hair-cloth; his girdle of a knotted rope.

A search was undertaken, and at Foo Yen, where a mountain torrent foamed down sharp crags among great boulders, they found Yuĕ, a builder, living almost like a hermit, his body hardy, his mind trained to breadth of vision, to clearness of aim, to selfless surrender to the laws of Heaven. He was the man whom Woo Ting had described. And he became his counsellor.

A hermit adviser to a recluse King! Could belief in a profound spirituality as the essential qualification in rulers be carried further? It is the very antithesis of the creed of modern democracies, as that ring of commercio-financial interests supported by Press-stupefied majorities now ruling half the globe is euphemistically called. Woo Ting the Silent would not achieve much popularity among voters whose hero is the tub-orator, the glib speaker lavish in promises he knows cannot be fulfilled, mighty in vitriolic abuse against those he feels are his superiors. Adroitness and powerful lungs, no scruples, no principles, skill in stock-exchange gambling, in the art of log-rolling and self-advertisement—he trusts to these to carry him into power. They often do. Then why trouble about rectitude and a brain capable of sustained thought? Thought has ceased to be the fashion. It might trammel the free play of words, and words, originally born as the expression and loyal servants of ideas, have by now completely superseded their masters, and dominate men's minds with huge detonations of meaningless sound.

Words, words, words—grand words, big words, foul words, winged words, resolutions of platforms, sanctimoniousness of pulpits, flare of headlines, blaze of advertisements—keep them going, shout them, preach them, print them, flash them, but do not let them cease for one moment, or there might be time for thought and the fog might clear—the thick fog of words which so completely, and oh so conveniently, blurs every boundary-line between fact and fiction, truth and falsehood, right and wrong. Among our word-hypnotized crowds, completely satisfied with the unhealthily glistening surface of their stagnant aspiration, a ruler who for three years had silently and reverently meditated on the way of truth and virtue would probably be confined as a certified lunatic.

Woo Ting's subjects nearly three thousand years ago had a truer instinct for vital values, knew that his silence was the preparation not merely for deep thought, but for vigorous action. The foundations of all lasting achievement, are they not always laid in the sacred depths of silence and of solitude? And Woo Ting's reign of nearly sixty years was full of fine achievement. He greatly strengthened and enlarged the frontiers by subduing several of the wild tribes whose predatory incursions constantly threatened the security of the Middle Kingdom. He maintained homes for the aged that the life of toilers should not end in bitterness and squalor. He never allowed himself in idleness, but did his utmost to foster content and prosperity among his people. He succeeded. Praise songs were heard again through the length and breadth of the Flowery Land, and he earned for himself the name of the Great, Benevolent Sovereign of Yin.

Which of the demagogues at present controlling the destinies of the world will be praised as great and remembered as benevolent?

A somewhat harsher note, but still a note of lofty purpose, is struck by Fah, afterwards called Woo, the founder of the Chou dynasty, by which that of Shang was supplanted.

"The time was the grey dawn of the morning of the fourth day of the second moon. The King came out into the open country of Muh, in the borders of Shang, to address his army. His left hand carried a battle-axe yellow with gold, his right a white ensign, which he waved aloft as a signal to his troops. And he said:

"'Far have ye come, ye men of the West. All ye rulers of friendlies, managers of public affairs, ministers of instruction, of war, and of works, lower grade magistrates, officers of my bodyguard, captains of thousands and hundreds, lift up your lances, link up your shields,

brandish your spears. Attend to my words. The Ancients had a saying: "Hens should not crow at sunrise. If they do the house falls to ruin." Now Chou Hsin of Shang follows only the whims of a woman, neglects the sacrifices due to his ancestors, blindly drives from him his father's brothers and his maternal uncles, holding them not in honour. Adventurers, criminals, fugitives from every quarter, these he honours, these he trusts, these he employs, raising them to the rank of nobles and officials that they may oppress the hundred families, tyrannize over and betray the cities of Shang. Now will I, Fah, in all reverence and humility, carry out the punishment decreed by Heaven. In to-day's battle do not advance more than six or seven steps, then halt and adjust your ranks. Do your best, my men. Do not renew the attack more than four, five, or seven times, then halt and adjust your ranks. Do your best, my men, your very best!'"

And while he was still speaking the sun arose, caught the multitude of spears, turned them into a dazzlement of sparkling light, caught the flutter of the many banners and roused their slumbering colours into brilliancy of blues, and purples, and reds. And the green of early spring laughed on the fields; the zest of early spring in the hearts of the soldiers—spring and joy of fighting and faith in victory. For they knew that what their small but compact force would be led to attack was big only in size, venerable only from age, all hollow and rotten within. They were right. They won.

Their victory should be reckoned among the epochmaking battles of history. It placed the leadership of the great Flowery Region into the hands of the longest-

lived dynasty the world so far has witnessed-the longest-lived, and in its beginnings, in its art, in its philosophy, in its endurance through time, one of the very greatest. Alas that its endings were to be small, sad, pitifully insignificant, the fate of most who have outlasted the purpose of their existence! The Shang or Yin Emperors whom the Chous overthrew also outlived their usefulness, but they did not dwindle wearily into dimness and decay. They ended in red blood and fire, and crashed from the pure heights of their dawn into a sulphurous abyss of lust and crime. For Chou Hsin, the last reigning descendant of the great T'ang, seems to have been a veritable fiend of tyranny and cruelty. He is described as squatting on his heels, neglecting the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, discontinuing the offerings in the ancestral temple, saying that the decree was his, that the people were his, that reverence need not be practised and oppression did not matter. It was he who instituted the punishment of roasting. He had the legbones cut through of some men whom he noticed wading through the water one icy winter morning, to discover what quality in their marrow enabled some to bear the cold so much better than others-the first example of vivisection on record.

Maybe impelled by the same scientific curiosity, he had pregnant women ripped open, and himself tore out the heart of a sage to see whether the belief that a scholar's heart possessed seven apertures was founded on fact.

It is interesting to speculate what would have been the fate of Asia if Chou Hsin had been victorious on the battlefield of Muh, and able to make his callously

inquiring type of mind prevail centuries before K'ung-futsze had formulated the religion of filial piety, Buddha that of universal love, and Christ that of humanity; if three thousand years ago the East, instead of Europe, had stumbled upon the invention of poison-gases and high explosives, which turn hair yellow, and faces green, and wrench clothes and flesh off their unhappy victims. Into what an intolerable nightmare it would have turned the history of humanity, scarred quite deeply enough as it is with cruelty and viciousness. All freedom and safety, all sense of human dignity, would have been extinguished, and without these, gaiety, art, poetry, music, religion, philosophy, the things that open up visions of the infinite in the heart of the humblest toiler, could never have developed. The world would have become peopled by squalid millions of sweated slaves, in blindness, poverty, and fear ministering to the insatiate appetites of a ring of tyrants leagued together to dominate the entire globe and to share its plunder behind the shelter of gigantic armaments. Fortunately there often is a pride in the downtrodden which refuses to be oppressed beyond a certain point, and mostly, sooner or later, rulers emboldened by success attempt to push beyond it. Also, a protracted spell of undisputed dominion produces in all but the very greatest a mental degeneration, an arrogance which leads the paramount dynasty, or caste, or nation, to genuinely believe that all under heaven has been created merely as a stool whereon they condescend to rest their sacred feet, and that the presumptuous mortal who dares dispute this admirable cosmogony must be either mad or hopelessly depraved. Hence a petulant intolerance towards any, even the

most legitimate opposition, a reckless persecution of those who have the courage and the honesty to try to keep such dangerous megalomania within reasonable bounds.

After six hundred years of sway it was perhaps inevitable that the Shang dynasty should produce a tyrant obsessed by such fatuity. The Hsia dynasty, after nearly five hundred years, had similarly given birth to a degenerate, a drunken sensualist who brought about its ruin. There are many points of resemblance between the two despots, Chou Hsin, however, being the worst. They both had their Pompadours and Dubarrys, and taxed the wealth and the labour of their subjects to the utmost in order to gratify their craving after everything costly and rare. Children might die of starvation, and the burden of too great a misery turn what had been happy townships into desolate slums-what matter so long as the ivory panels of a new pavilion pleased the ruling beauty, and the freshly laid out palace gardens with their groves and ponds, and marble bridges and jewel-like kiosks, provided an agreeable setting for the sovereign's afternoon stroll! Chou Hsin also had a lofty tower constructed of fragrant cedar-wood-Lu Tai, the Stag Tower-the better to contemplate the glory of his worldly possessions. For as the poverty of his mind increased, so did the magnificence of his surroundings. Up to the last, when the battle-axes of the victors were thundering against the gold-studded doors of that marvellous tower, he clung to this external splendour, arrayed himself in his most gorgeous robes, his costliest gems, before setting fire to it all, that reclining on his lacquer throne, he might fill his eyes with the riotous glory of red flames, watch the gold carvings of walls

and ceilings suddenly intensify their life a thousand-fold, burst into a million jets of brilliant flames, break free and fly off on the scorching wind in sheaves of sparks dazzling against a bright blue sky. It was the last feast offered to his vision. Before the fire had leapt up to its utmost height, the poison he had taken did its work. The hands wherewith he clutched the sculptured dragons of his throne grew clammy, the eyes wherewith he stared into the vivid flames grew blank, and the whole cumbrous body slipped and sank empty, limp, within the richly broidered robes and the rainbow glimmer of great pearls.

Meanwhile, the people over whom he had tyrannized so long, trembling and bewildered, as the humble must be when the great ones of the world fall out, waited for the victor outside the walls of the city. His vanguard came galloping hot and eager through the dust of the road, and as their horses clattered up towards the open gateway, they shouted Woo's message to the crowd:

"Supreme Heaven sends you down His blessing!"

Then a great cry of relief went up from the multitude, and men and women brought their baskets full of azure and yellow silks as an offering to their new master's greatness. Which was considerable. For what he and his brother, the able Duke of Chou (Chou Kung), established was a government which, while successfully keeping down foreign aggression and internal lawlessness, yet allowed full scope to the development of individuality, without which permanent achievement in anything is impossible. Under the dynasty he founded the breath of a tremendous vitality sweeps through the Middle Kingdom, and puts the seal of intrinsic greatness on all the intellectual and practical activities of the period.

The works produced then stand out above the fluctuating fashions of weaker epochs like granite rocks strongly based on the inmost truth of things. Especially in philosophy, through such master-minds as Confucius and Lao-Tsze, a level was reached unequalled elsewhere for centuries. From mere questions of practical politics to the search for the great beginning and the ultimate end of creation, an immense field of inquiry was surveyed and illuminated by the fearless labour of a number of philosophical thinkers.

Perhaps it was this very abundance of independent thought which helped to undermine the political strength of the central government. For after a while, the dynasty lacked monarchs sufficiently great to co-ordinate all these seething energies, to utilize their vigour in the service of its own needs. So they split away and formed little centres of their own, and the Empire dissolved into a number of small kingdoms, always in rivalry and frequently at war with each other. The wars, as is generally the case with these ebullitions of mere greed or hate, covered a few swash-bucklers with glory, but brought sorrow and poverty to thousands of peaceful toilers; the rivalry, however, was not without real advantages. Many of these small courts, ruled by enlightened princes, provided gathering-points for several brilliant and wonderfully diversified schools of thought. In the borderkingdoms there was, besides, a powerful colonizing activity among the waste lands and wild tribes beyond the old circle of Chinese civilization, which consequently was steadily widened. Only the court of the paramount sovereign became more and more restricted to merely ceremonial functions, such as the offering the yearly sacrifices to the great Spirits of Heaven and Earth. But of earth the Emperor controlled less than many of his feudatories, and the heaven above his territory dwindled to a slit of blue framed in the clouds that were to devour it.

For the Chou dynasty fell from weakness, not from wickedness like the Hsia and the Shang dynasties, though once also in Yu Wang it had produced its evil despot swayed by vicious women, extortionate sycophants, and unworthy ministers. His folly may have contributed to the fall of his line. Does not the evil that men do live after them? Yet the direct cause of this fall was the gradual withdrawal of effective power, not its heady excess. Indeed, the hands to whom power has been entrusted must, if they wish to retain it, exercise constant vigilance, unflagging energy, be they those of an autocratic Emperor or of a self-governing democracy. Always there are other hands working in the dark, watching for the least sign of weakness or weariness, to tear this luring bauble of power from them. As in the United States the big trusts are triumphantly sapping the sovereignty of the people, so the great nobles grown into kings undermined the overlordship of the Son of Heaven. Finally Ts'in, grown the strongest of these truculent feudatories, crushed them all, Son of Heaven, kings and kinglets, and made its own prince, Sheng, Emperor of a China unified under his sway.

They are pathetic phantoms, those last representatives of that proud family in whom the glories of the past had lived again, to whom the present had paid joyful homage, before whom a vast future had lain open in a great Vermilion Book, mysteriously presented to its founders.

The early Chous and their mighty predecessors—the Yellow Emperor with his mystic dreams and practical intelligence; Shao and Shun, who unfolded above the ignorant multitudes the divinely white banners of reverence, sincerity, and compassion; Yü, adding unto these a firm domination over men's and nature's rebellions against necessary discipline; the self-sacrificing T'ang, the selfcontrolled Tai Kia-they burn on that far horizon, half fact, half dream, wherein all past history resolves itself, like the towering peaks of a great mountain range, still kindled by the sunset glow of memory, while the landscape to which they belong is irretrievably lost in the ever deepening night of oblivion. And the last rulers of the Chou dynasty are like the lower slopes of these far summits, humbly hastening to bury their insignificance in level darkness of woods and plain-even their names vague, obliterated. Nan-Wang was the very last who still held possession of the nine tripods cast in bronze under Yü, hallowed by age into symbols of paramount sovereignty. Victorious Ts'in took them from him (256 B.C.). Soon after, dimly and wearily, the defeated monarch sank into his grave. And now across the gulfs of time, between that distant date and the shrill noises of to-day, his name "Nan-Wang" drifts to us in a faint pianissimo, like the dying notes of some dreamy nocturne, arousing no echoes of heroic struggle, of inspiring death, only a low murmur of sadness at the pitful ending of what had once been so great. The treasures of the Chous, accumulated through long centuries, went to embellish the palaces of the conqueror-the dragon robes which had hung so loosely round Nan-Wang's shrunken frame, the imperial cap with its pearls and its pendants of jade, were worn by

a new ruler; the old order of things was overthrown and another set up.

Or a new disorder.

Shih Huang Ti, the first autocrat universal Emperor as he styled himself, introduced the silence of a great fear where there had been a babel of many voices, and where there had been the contentions of many wills he brought about the slavery of all under the tyranny of one will only, his own, directed mainly towards extending the Middle Kingdom's political power and concentrating its exercise in his own hands. For this purpose he destroyed feudalism, the usual name given to government by great nobles of the districts wherewith they themselves, or their ancestors, had been endowed by the central power, whose authority, nominally extensive, was in practice exceedingly limited. In Europe, ever since the French Revolution, this system has come in for much wholesale abuse-like most abuse, largely undeserved. Feudalism has, of course, often been worked in a tyrannical manner and been made subservient to the selfish designs of the exploiters of mankind, but no system of government has yet been devised, or possibly can be devised, which is free from this danger. The most elaborate contrivances of parliaments, senates, universal suffrage, referendums, often produce nothing but a scenic illusion of liberty, all its reality, all its benefits eaten out of them, strangled by red tape or stultified by public apathy. Sturdily independent peasant communities, wealthy self-governing townships, do, as a matter of fact, thrive more readily in a feudal than in a strongly centralized State, whether

the bureaucracy of the latter takes its orders from a selfcrowned autocrat, from an elected chamber, or from a cabinet nominally dependent on the chamber. How greatly such autonomous communities had prospered under the feudalism of the Chou dynasty is evidenced by the success which crowned their resistance to the despotism introduced by Shih Huang Ti only a few years after his death. Indeed the roots they have struck in Chinese soil are so profound, that to this day they send up the sap of a robust will to independence and selfdetermination. Without such will to freedom there may be much boasting about freedom of the Press, freedom of speech, freedom of trade, etc., but every one of these will have shrivelled into a hollow formula. lulling the public conscience to sleep, while all who seem in any way to endanger the despotic schemes of the rulers will be fined, imprisoned, executed, in flagrant defiance of the very formulas on which they relied for their protection. Indeed, unless the will to power in the rulers be constantly balanced by the will to liberty in the governed, it cannot be otherwise but that the scales should tilt in favour of the former, allowing their ambition to expand to the utmost limit of its capacity. And beyond.

Shih Huang Ti certainly stretched his power beyond the limit of the endurable when, not content with depriving his subjects of their former political leaders, he tore from them also their old spiritual guides—or at least attempted to do so, and for a time wellnigh succeeded. His is the world-famous crime of the burning of the books. On Li Ssŭ, his prime minister and the main agent of his absolutism, falls the opprobrium of having first suggested it.

"The learned," so he memorialized (213 B.C.), "all quote the Ancients in order to run down the present. Now, since Your Majesty has united the Realm, separated black from white, and set up a single head, they want to criticize laws and regulations from the view-point of their preconceived opinion. As soon as they hear that a new edict has been issued, every one of them sits in judgment on it, according to his individual doctrine. At home, they find fault with it privately in their thoughts; abroad, they discuss it publicly in the streets. They consider it proper to criticize the Monarch, meritorious to differ from him. They influence the masses and spread slanderous rumours among them. If this be not prohibited, at the summit the sovereign's power will sink, from the bottom dissensions and disorders arise. It is advisable to put a stop to this.

"I submit that the official books of history, all except the Annals of Ts'in, be burned. Any one who, without being a member of the College of Scholars, presumes to keep in his possession copies of the Shi King, the Shoo King, or the treatises of the hundred Schools, shall without exception hand them over to the authorities, that these may burn them. Those who dare talk together about the Shi King or the Shoo King are to be exposed on the market-place; those who on the strength of antiquity find fault with the present are to be put to death with their whole family. Officials who are aware of infractions of the law and fail to report them become liable to the same punishment.

"Whoever has not burnt the indexed books within thirty days after proclamation of the edict is to be branded and condemned to forced labour. Books on medicine, pharmacy, divination, agriculture, and arboriculture are exempted.

"Any one desirous of studying laws and regulations can apply to an official to instruct him."

There is a pungent flavour of a Defence of the Realm Act about this memorial.

Its recommendations all became law.

Administration according to precedent and acknowledged standards of right and wrong was abolished, and administration by proclamation according to the whim of the autocrat triumphantly installed in its place. Scholars and sages whose reputation depended only on the soundness of their learning, not on the favour of the government, were slain, or branded and forced to toil at the building of the Great Wall, or on roads and palaces, on Shih Huang Ti's sepulchre, probably all called works of public utility; the instruction of the people forcibly limited to what they could extract from the official brain, not remarkable at any period or in any latitude for profound thinking or disinterested erudition. Books over which youths in their first glorious thirst for the ideal had pored and dreamed; works which had comforted men in poverty and exile or upheld them while in power on the lone heights of virtue; songs lovers sang in warm summergloaming to the sweetfaced maiden of their desire; ditties that lightened the worker's toil; poems which had soothed the weary and solaced the sorrowful, drawing meaning and beauty into their grief; the records of ancient valiancy; the wisdom of Kung-fu-tsze; the visions of Mo Ti; all these and many more were searched for, seized, heaped together in an hundred market-places, and burned in the evil blaze of a great fire. The crowds looked on, too

terrified to interfere, but over four hundred scholars had the courage openly to resist the iniquitous decree.

They were buried alive—their mouths stopped with mud and dirt, not because they confused the people with lies, but because they kept before it the great truths of the old sages, and bade it cherish the luminous tradition of a law based on a morality binding on every member of the community, valid above the edicts even of an Emperor. This persecution of books and scholars was a shameful deed, an offence against the Holy Ghost, which it is written is the one thing that can never be forgiven. But Shih Huang Ti, his whole mind absorbed in the tangible, caring for nothing but positive results, probably never troubled to think judgment attaches to every deed done, that what is founded on destruction and persecution will in its turn be destroyed and persecuted. His object was to establish a despotic bureaucracy centralized in himself. To succeed in this, it was necessary to change a nation of intelligent men, accustomed to an almost excessive measure of freedom and keenly alive to the value of independent thought, into an army of obedient taxpayers and conscripts, void of any ideas but those referring to their material needs, with no opportunity, and finally without any desire, to develop speculative theories which might prove subversive to the autocracy. Like Napoleon, he hated ideologues, knowing well that thoroughgoing despotism can only strike permanent roots where the masses are sunk in ignorance and mental apathy. The burning of the books was a declaration of war against the people's right to think for themselves, against the existence of a class of intellectuals sufficiently strong to create an enlightened and fearless public opinion. Could

it have been applied in his days, Shih Huang Ti would no doubt have preferred the modern device for producing the desired degree of national stupidity. It is more effective than his crude, destructive way.

Truth is not burnt-it is shouted down.

Men are not forbidden to read—on the contrary, through the thousand insidious channels of a Press supposed to be free, they are tempted to read excessively, and to read nothing but the lies, the fictions, and such garbled scraps of truth as it suits the Government to publish.

Public opinion is not suppressed—it is cooked.

The subject's physical liberty is not violated—his mind gets twisted into regulation pattern, his outlook vitiated, and often this is accomplished while he is still too young to realize what is being done to him.

The advantages of this method are twofold:

In the first place, there is no bloodshed, no sensational martyrdom to arouse pity, to inflame indignation.

Secondly, whereas the prohibiting of books leaves the people's mind blank and therefore open to better influences, which might in time stimulate to successful rebellion, the process of stuffing it with lies renders it impervious to anything that contradicts these lies; indeed, they may have become so embedded in the brains of the majority, they are cherished as an article of faith for which multitudes will unhesitatingly, gladly lay down their fortunes and their lives.

Shih Huang Ti's rough system could at best only secure conformity of action; the modern way produces conformity of thought, often more dangerous to real freedom than the violent persecution which the Chinese Emperor's subjects had to bear. For though threatened with dire physical tortures, they were at least suffered to keep the unclouded mind, the open eye which cannot in the long run be kept in bondage.

However, under Shih Huang Ti's vigorous hand bondage was complete, freedom merely a distant hope-its actual attainment impossible, largely because the bulk of the population, wearied of the constant quarrels, the paralysing jealousies of the feudal principalities, welcomed an united empire too eagerly to inquire very closely by what means the union had been accomplished. So the new Emperor could move from success to success. Dazzled by such good fortune, he began to think he was building for eternity, that the dynasty which he inaugurated would people the vast corridors of time with an unending procession of Ts'in autocrats. The only flaw in his satisfaction was that he himself could not rule his empire forever, that he who had dethroned so many princes, used such millions of human lives as mere tools wherewith to materialize his tumultuous desires, should be liable to the same decay that overtakes the humblest coolie.

There was a legend—a rumour, born, as such tales are, from knowledge turned to ignorance, from longing kindled into hope and promise—of some islands of the blessed, gleaming in blueness of the Eastern Sea, whence the dawn comes and the stars and the splendour of the rising sun. All living creatures dwelling there were said to be pure white, the palaces and porticoes sheer gold and chiselled silver. And a herb grew there, partaking of which one obtained immunity from death.

Seen from a distance, those beauteous islands looked like shimmering clouds, but as soon as a ship drew near them, down they sank into the deep, and gusts of contrary winds arose, driving the ship far back again, so that none could hope to reach them.

Yet in very ancient times human beings had landed there.

Shih Huang Ti, athirst for the immortality of bodily existence, fitted out an expedition of youths and maidens, under the leadership of one of those necromancers whose fantasies he greatly preferred to the hard truths of the learned. They were to search for these islands, find them, and bring back the precious herb, which would enable him to defy what he had so mercilessly inflicted on others, and what he dreaded so much himself—death.

But the winds were not favourable—they never are to that kind of enterprise. Meanwhile he was trying to reduce to ashes the only kind of immortality that is of value, the immortality of grateful remembrance, of aspiration towards the fulfilment of the divine purpose, whereof the human mind at its greatest catches some wondrous glimpses here and there and sets them like radiant gems in the golden setting of art, poetry, heroic action, inspired eloquence of prophets. But in none of these did the autocrat Emperor see anything except impediments to making his own will to power supreme throughout Eastern Asia. According to his faith and that of Li Ssu, his famous prime minister, there is no instinctive good in man; his mind is naturally evil, fear the only way of ruling him. They forgot that even if this melancholy assumption be true-and there is, of course, so much greed, cowardice, envy, and injustice in the world that it oftens appears to be true-fear, to be an effective method of government, must be sure of always remaining stronger than the hatred it provokes, and should never forget that the submissiveness cringing before it is only a mask behind which lurk resentment, treachery, vindictiveness, cruelty, and all the dangerous toxins fear breeds in the blood of men.

They build better who base their rule on the subjects' devotion. In times of safety there is a joyfulness, a trustworthiness in the service of loyalty which makes it infinitely more valuable than that of fear; in times of stress there is no sacrifice to which it will not submit, no danger which it will refuse to face. Such service the Ts'in dynasty failed to command.

Shih Huang Ti knew he was well hated. Twice, to foil any would-be assassins, he had an enormous palace built with so large a number of bedrooms he could sleep in a different one almost every night.

Altogether, he was a mighty constructor. His most famous achievement in that way, the Great Wall, still draws its huge ramparts across Northern China, and did for some time effectually protect it against Tartar incursions. And no material works of defence, however strong, however cunningly devised, can ever give more than a few years' safety. Also he constructed roads with watchtowers and bridges, that he and his troops might move swiftly and securely from one end of his dominions to the other, for he was a warrior and conqueror, and greatly extended the political boundaries of his empire, which, according to the ethics in vogue since Louis XIV organized his Chambres de Réunion, is a thing of transcendent merit, justifying the greatest sacrifices and every moral obliquity.

His energy was boundless, his powers of work tremendous. Eight high-mettled horses drawing his chariot at top speed, a million toilers slaving at the buildings he ordered, could not keep pace with the urgency of his schemes, the impatience of his desires. For his sepulchre he ordered a mountain to be tunnelled and excavated, masses of precious things to be accumulated there, that he might be imperial and dazzling even among the dead.

His last act seems to have been a pilgrimage to Mount Koei Kei, where his mighty predecessor, the great conqueror of the floods, the Emperor Yü, lay buried.

As on his way to the ancient tomb he passed through the long avenue of cypresses which for centuries had grown out of the silence of their roots, and now stood black against the fervent light of day, a procession of witnesses to the solemnity of death, to the sacredness of life, did he hear in the sap and swaying of their branches the voices of those four hundred scholars whom he had buried alive? Did their flame-like upward pointing trouble him with remembrance of all the spiritual wealth he had destroyed by fire? Poetic justice seems to demand it, but in the prose of actual life the strong self-willed man, the Napoleonic type to which Shih Huang Ti belonged, never repents. Nothing but failure on the material plane—the only one of which he is vividly conscious can ever lead him to regret any of his past actions, however criminal. And Shih Huang Ti died before failure overtook the work of his life. Also, self-deception can go very far, and often succeeds in making men honestly believe that all the bullyings and persecutions they inflict on the world are justified by some noble motive, some inspiring cause, and are not in the least the outcome of an inordinate will to power, a crudely selfish obsession to impose their authority on others.

Further, there is an elemental force in these Napoleonic characters like that of a sudden flood overlapping banks, undermining dykes, spreading drownings and devastations over a whole country-side; a diabolical energy like that of the avalanche thundering down sheer precipices to reduce a valley of thriving villages into a stony wilderness of shale and rubble. And these strong men themselves know they possess this force, revel in its exercise. And others know it: if honest, shrink away from it; if greedy and dishonest, fawn on it and flatter it. Only the greatly courageous dare confront it and oppose its lawless course, often to be mercilessly overwhelmed. But there is an immortality in revolt against oppression, in self-sacrificing struggle against enormous odds, in steadfast adherence to the individual's right to live despite the pretensions of an overgrown and insatiable power, which outshines all the noisy triumphs of brute force. Sooner or later, martyred men and martyred nations achieve a sweeping victory over those who imagined they could crush them and keep them down for ever.

For, in the nature of things, that which is noble is vital and will endure, while the ignoble, being sterile, must utterly perish.

This is what befell the sovereignty, in appearance irresistibly mighty, which Shih Huang Ti had acquired. He wanted to leave it to his eldest son, but even that wish was frustrated by the very men on whose loyalty he had a special claim. Lies, murders, forgeries, gave the succession to a younger son, a tool in the hands of one of those unscrupulous upstarts whom a weakening of public morality always brings to the front; and Shih Huang Ti's strong minister, Li Ssu, instead of opposing,

readily connived at the fraud. The short-sighted policy of stiffing the voice of conscience, of abrogating the authority of the lofty ethical standards of the ancient sages, began to bear its inevitable fruit in the loosening of all the bonds that make it possible to carry on a civilized government. First human life was deprived of its inner greatness, then it lost its external safety as well.

All the childless concubines of Shih Huang Ti's harem were compelled to commit suicide, that his ghost might not have to roam about without the charms of feminine society. Workmen who had constructed his sepulchre and knew of the immense amount of treasure it contained were walled up in its dark tunnellings, that the secret might die with them. Li Ssu himself was hurled to destruction by the intrigues of his former fellow-conspirator, grown envious of the abler man's increasing influence on the Emperor. All the fear he had driven into so many anguished hearts flowed back into his own when he was flung into prison, cruelly flogged, and finally condemned to be sawn in two with his son in the public market-place. As they were led out to their ghastly doom, the father said to the son:

"O that we twain, together with our faithful yellow dog, could go out by the eastern gate of Shang-tsai to hunt the wily hare."

Poor darkened soul! All this happened long ago. Possibly now he stands in the great light of world-wide tolerance and strives to warn all those who believe, as he once did, that evil is man's real nature and that the spirit can be killed. Erh Shih, the contemptible monarch who ordered all this bloodshed, or at least acquiesced in it, was slain by the creature who had stolen the crown

for him and now wished to place it on a younger and more docile head. At that court where each one was only working for his own schemes and none could trust the other, it is not surprising that this regicide was in his turn put to death by his second nominee, and that the leaders of the army, sick of all this senseless intriguing and assassining, rose in rebellion, stamped out the whole brood, and fought for the empty throne among themselves.

After several years of struggle, Liu Pang, of simple peasant origin, became the founder of the splendid Han dynasty. As such, he called himself Kao Tsu. But his full title was Tai Tsu Kao Huang Ti, the Great Ancestral Sublime Sovereign Emperor, and he saw to it that this magnificent title did not remain an empty sound, signifying nothing.

With all a peasant's sense of reality, a peasant's shrewdness in not sowing more ground than he could expect to reap, he effected a working compromise between the tyrannical centralization of the Ts'in and the excessive feudalism of the decadent Chou dynasty. alienating the goodwill of the nobles, he contrived to keep their power in check by making merit and learning the only avenue to official rank. Nor did he commit Shih Huang Ti's paramount mistake of trying to establish something durable on a foundation of mere conquest void of any moral sanction. He had learnt the lesson that a dynasty whose hold over the people does not extend beyond the reach of the executioner's sword, the tramp of its armies, the glitter of its gold, can never become more than the bubble of a day. He reverted to the basic idea of Chinese kingship, namely, that of priestlike authority, of mediation between God and mankind, transmitting with humble and unfailing filial piety the bright ordinances of Heaven to the nation he was ordained to rule.

After so many years of political confusion there must have been a deep longing in the heart of the people for some spiritual refuge, some centre where the ethical standards which threatened to get submerged could be safely and permanently anchored. And Kao Tsu knew where to find it. Solemnly, processionally, for all whom it might concern to see and take note of, he went to the tomb of K'ung-fu-tsze, meditated and sacrificed there.

Then through the length and breadth of the Middle Kingdom temples arose to the lofty ideas for which the sage had lived and laboured. And the temples were lasting and beautiful, because their outlines had shaped themselves for centuries in the hearts of the chosen few—and there are always only a few—who could think the Master's thoughts, understand the Master's meaning, and walk the hard, narrow way whereon his feet had been set.

It has been said that the cult then established round K'ung-fu-tsze tended to fossilize the mental energy of the Chinese, to impose on them the yoke of too rigid an orthodoxy. But can the precepts of virtue be worshipped too much? As well say, people choke from the abundance of pure air. Reverence bestowed on genuine greatness can never have any but a vitalizing effect. It is only when from other wholly disconnected causes, political, social, economic, the mental energy of a nation fails to such an extent as to become incapable of genuine reverence, that its officially established cults degenerate into a formalism which may stifle what few sparks of originality are left. But what do a few sparks matter? One

day the great fire burns up again, transfuses all the hollow formalism back into reverence, finds a fresh interpretation for the ancient wisdom, kindles ancient greatness once more into truth and life. Till that too, after being jeered at and persecuted, is adopted by the masses—to be used as a cloak wherewith to hide the nakedness of their poverty from themselves and others, for tickling their ears with a jingle of beautiful words, for flattering their mouths with the flavour of unctuous holiness. Only their mouths. A truly great doctrine seldom penetrates beyond the tip of their tongue or becomes the motive-power of their lives, part and parcel of their inmost being. Their blood is too thin to carry the burden of high principles, a burden needing the attention not of one hour, but of all hours, not of one day, but of all days, watchfulness in the constraining presence of others, vigilance in the freedom of solitude. To surround K'ung-fu-tsze's tablet with a magnificent temple was simple enough; to carry his mental honesty into every scheme, his sincerity, humaneness, and unselfishness into every act of government, a far more arduous task.

Yang Hiung, a Han philosopher of his school, being asked why the contemporaries of K'ung-fu-tsze had not made use of his wisdom, answered:

"If they had, they would have been obliged to follow him; to follow him, they would have been obliged to give up their habits, to violate their inclinations, to renounce their own opinions, to exert themselves to the utmost. Only the most eminently virtuous in the State were capable of making use of him."

And that is true of every inspired ethical system. Still, it is something to publicly acknowledge it as an ideal to which human actions should more or less conform, as a standard by which human values shall be measured. Wherefore Kao Tsu rendered his people an immense service when he visibly invested K'ung-fu-tsze's name with a sacredness it already possessed invisibly in the hearts of the chosen few.

Hoei Ti, the benevolent, generous Emperor, Kao Tsu's son and successor, went even further on this wisely chosen path. He revoked the edict against spiritual freedom, the decree of banishment which Shih Huang Ti had launched against the ancient books. It was the signal for a mighty resurrection. Out of hollow walls, secret recesses, crumbling cottages, out of holes in the rocks, out of the tombs of the dead, out of the heart of the living, the beautiful old records came forth, the lovely old songs arose, jubilant, multitudinous, mutilated a little, but in no wise irreparably scarred, reduced in size, diminished in completeness, but augmented by an aureole of martyrdom, by the value men attach to what they were in danger of losing. Thousands of hands bestirred themselves to copy the old texts into the new script, hundreds of brains to interpret them afresh.

It was a splendid Renaissance, a quickening of the national mind with the vigour and sanity of the great days of old. Again the breath of a fine energy swept through the land. Much sound work was done in art and letters. Sze Ma Tsien, the great historian, was the product of those stirring times. Roads, canals, bridges, beneficent legislation, mighty deeds of arms against the northern and western nomads, those inveterate troublers of Chinese peace, the subjugation of Korea, the opening up of fresh trade-routes, everywhere a capacity for

the planning and carrying out of great and useful enterprise.

The dynasty to whose initiative much of this was due even produced a saint-like sovereign resembling the imperial sages of old, Wen Ti—the scholarly Emperor. In his plain robes of coarse material, his shoes of untanned leather, a simple strap for his unadorned sword, with his aversion to every form of luxury and idleness, his insistence on frugality and work even for the Empress, his love of learning, his pity for the poor, his consciousness of how little human excellence can achieve compared to what it longs to do and to the stupendous need for goodness in the world, he seems to have reincarnated the austere virtues of the great T'ang. Full of a generous liberalism, he revoked one of the repressive laws of Shih Huang Ti, proclaiming:

"Under our ancient Emperors it was the custom to set up on one side of the palace a roll whereon every one was free to write down suggestions for improvements; on the other, a tablet for entering complaints and pointing out the mistakes of the government, the object being to encourage criticism and to obtain valuable advice. To-day among our laws I find one making it a crime to speak ill of the government. That is the way to lose not only the light of sages dwelling at a distance, but also to close the mouths of our own officers. How then can the monarch ever be told of his errors and shortcomings? Also it lays every one who in the least degree falls short of unquestioning obedience open to the reproach of rebellion. The most harmless remarks are reported to the magistrates, and can at their sweet will be interpreted as seditious attacks on the government. Thus

the simple and ignorant may find themselves unwittingly turned into criminals. No, I cannot tolerate this: let the law be repealed."

Another year, when a solar eclipse had put the fear of God into all hearts, Wen Ti, so truly imperial was he, so profoundly conscious that beyond the human best there always is a divine better, decreed:

"This eleventh moon there has been an eclipse of the sun. What a warning for me! On high, loss of brightness; below, human misery. It makes me realize my lack of virtue. Wherefore, immediately on publication of this edict let men most noted for their knowledge, wisdom, and integrity be sought out and sent to me, and the most searching inquiry be made into my mistakes, that I may be advised thereon. I, on my side, will admonish all magistrates to apply themselves to their duties with increased zeal for the benefit of the people, and above all to cut down every unnecessary expenditure. Whereof I myself will set the example."

This edict practically amounts to the summoning of a parliament, taking this word in its original meaning of a body of notables deputed by the provinces to the court, in order to lay the people's grievances before the monarch and tender to him their advice on suggested remedies or on new laws. Only advice—no orders yet, or even demands, but the mere possibility of free discussion precludes the passing of any oppressive legislation, and a monarch as anxious as Wen Ti to keep in touch with public opinion was not likely to promulgate any unjust measures. What a healthy interest in public affairs his liberal edict must have stimulated! It was this trust in the governed, this joyous confidence in the

freedom of their words and thoughts, that brought the Han dynasty such lasting fame, endeared it so much to the heart of the people that the Chinese still proudly call themselves the Sons of Han.

The resultant loyal co-operation between ruler and ruled also made Wu Ti's, the Warrior Emperor's numerous campaigns productive of such good results. Good on the whole. They widened the orbit within which Chinese civilization could spread its benefits, brought fresh wealth into the country, opened up new routes and centres of trade.

And yet there was evil mixed with the good. A minister of the early Chou dynasty already warned his King against the dangers of setting too much value on foreign products:

"By finding his amusement in things he would ruin his aims, which should rest only in what is right."

But it is just this finding of amusement in things which international trade tends to encourage. Does it not often make its biggest profits by stimulating desire for spirits, opium, weapons, beads, millinery, all manner of futile or harmful things? Creating a demand! Scarcely ever a demand for anything beneficial, making for the real good of the world. Of course, in the days of the Hans international commerce had not nearly reached those heights of depravity whence to-day it hurls war and misery throughout the globe, just for the sake of destroying an inconvenient rival, of monopolizing trade-routes, of seizing commodious harbours and promising deposits of mineral wealth. Yet even then the dark spots, now grown into a hideous leprosy, had begun to appear—seem, indeed, inseparable from this whole business of international trade.

It was not to strengthen his frontiers, which were never threatened from that quarter, nor to spread the ethics of the old Chinese sages among barbarians, that Wu Ti waged war against Tongking. Desire for its gold and ivory was the main incentive, no doubt skilfully disguised under the less discreditable labels of State necessity and military glory.

In a pretty old-fashioned ballad called "The Revenge of the Flowers," a girl who has crowded her room with masses of exquisite blossoms is found dead in the morning, overwhelmed by excess of their fragrance. As though to avenge the many base means used to obtain it, the same dangerous narcotic lurks in the acquisition of material wealth, in the heaping up of rare and costly objects. The glitter of gold, the glamour of beautiful women, of richly caparisoned horses, are terribly apt to bring selfindulgence where there has been self-discipline, extravagance where there has been frugality, covetousness where there has been charity. Taste for luxuries stimulated to the utmost, men in power become tempted to find their amusement in things, to neglect the serious work of government, to lose sight of the nobler aims of life. Only the very strong and absolutely sane, who know how to preserve the right perspective in their appreciation of values, can hope to escape moral deterioration where the main bent of the national will is directed towards the accumulation of material wealth. The majority, gradually but fatally, slip from fall to fall, from lust of pleasure to indolence, from greed through envy to dishonesty, rapacity, cruelty, which in their turn provoke callous oppressions, terrible rebellions, infamous aggressions, and all the horrors of internecine and external warfare.

It was on to this dangerous slope that the Han dynasty stepped when Wu Ti forsook the ancient simplicity and indulged in the most lavish extravagances. Soo, an honest counsellor, remonstrated with him, and with fine spirit submitted the following memorial:

"Your Majesty considers a palace the size of a large town too small, and orders endless new constructions, all with high-sounding names—the Residence of a Thousand Portals, the Palace of Ten Thousand Gateways. The women of your household [there were hundreds] are loaded with diamonds, pearls, and every conceivable precious gem; your horses are gorgeously caparisoned, even your dogs wear costly collars. Furniture and utensils are all profusely decorated. The round of playacting, festivities, concerts, dancing is interminable. If your Majesty were to follow my advice you would heap up all these vain luxuries in a public square, and have the whole pile burnt to ashes, to prove to the world you have realized their utter worthlessness."

Wu Ti, being an able ruler, was not offended at such outspoken advice, but unfortunately it is not recorded that he followed it.

However, he devoted some of his building and collecting zeal to the construction and acquiring of a magnificent library. Under his weaker successors, often youths of feeble will-power and mediocre intelligence, it became dangerous even to remonstrate against imperial extravagance. Addicted to pleasure, swayed by the baser instead of by the best influences at their court, these later representatives of what had been such a splendid line grow more and more uninteresting, more and more contemptible. That recurring pest of the Chinese palace, the eunuchs,

came prominently to the fore, flattering the worst passions of the holder of the supreme power in order to seize it for themselves, just as in Europe, in times of mental torpor, all manner of demagogues and of corrupt influences control the national conscience, pandering to the worst tastes, the lowest instincts of the public, in order to exploit it for their own profit.

Now and again there was a return to better ways. Ming Ti, the enlightened Emperor (58 to 76 A.D.), was zealous in the founding of schools, the control of the floods. Whether his introduction of Buddhism should be accounted him as mistake or merit it is hard to say. Possibly as neither, since his action may only have slightly accelerated a movement which would have occurred in any event.

His son, Tchang Ti, followed a nationally sounder inspiration when, in the great Hall of the White Tiger, he assembled a number of distinguished scholars to examine the concordances and variations of the ancient literature, now grown as sacred as the writings of the Old Testament became with the Jews.

What a wagging of grey beards over the precious documents, what a shaking of wise old heads over bamboostrips and rolls of silk brown with age, what an adjusting of spectacles on rheumy eyes peering over closely written pages, must have taken place in that lofty hall with its frieze of sculptured tigers, and the sun lying in great golden squares on the closely woven matting of the floor. Yet, that the live inspiration of the great Emperors and sages of old had become a matter of book-learning, a monopoly of the scholar, was perhaps as ominous a sign as the growing love of luxury among the leading classes.

Certainly, soon after Tchang Ti's death the downward pace grew more and more rapid. At one time the eunuchs murdered all their most dangerous opponents among the officials still jealous of the integrity of the government. At another, the army, indignant at the power of these debased creatures, organized a wholesale massacre of eunuchs. As in all these ugly cases of retribution by carnage, the idea of righteous punishment wherewith it started was soon forgotten and drowned in indiscriminate bloodshed. A number of innocent lives were destroyed along with the guilty, while the roots of the evil were left entirely untouched, free to send up the same poisonous shoots at the earliest opportunity. The lust for slaughter, once let loose, was stimulated rather than satiated by the murder of its original victims, and finally became impossible to quell.

Soon the whole capital was deep in blood and fire, civil war rampant, and the whole splendid structure of the Han Empire split asunder. Bands of marauders, Red Eyebrows, Yellow Turbans, foreign invaders, military dictators, shadow Emperors, ghostly dynasties, division into three kingdoms, division into north and south, division between Tartar and Chinese, battles and the rumours of battles, murders, treacheries, usurpationsthree centuries of sheer nightmare. The main actors in all these whirlpools of passions stirred up from black depths of latent savagery are singularly vague and unsubstantial. No doubt they were enthrallingly important to themselves, but, unlit by any inner radiance, they crumble into wellnigh nameless dust when, looking backward, the mind seeks to reconstruct the story of their lives.

Hou Chi, the last reigning representative of the Han family, was deposed, given the title of the Duke of Pleasure, contemptuously flung aside among his wine-jars and his women, to make room for a man of greater energy, if not of superior morality. Indeed, there seems to have been scarcely any morality left among the leaders. In times of protracted warfare, where armed force, having ceased to be the obedient servant of justice, becomes its bully, such a result is inevitable.

Pitiable times.

Even the good in men ineffectual, or caught in the trap of mechanical observances, of ready-made beliefs. Like the religious fervour of the Wu Ti, of the short-lived Liang dynasty. Instead of its filling him with a keen sense of the duties of his position, as it would have done in a healthier age, it only made him long for the peace of a monastery, where, muttering "Om mani padme um," meditating on the illusoriness of active life, gazing on incense-sticks and lotus blossoms, he could pray to some towering Boddhisattva for the people's welfare, which it was his mission to promote by his own exertions. But all true sense of mission had got lost. The mandate of Heaven trailed miserably on the ground, picked up now and again by this ruler or that, for his little day sumptuous in splendour of old imperial dragon-robes, lordly in the magnificence of old imperial palaces. He would even offer yearly sacrifices to Heaven and to the Spirits of the Grain and Land. But these had withdrawn away into the depths-were not to be lured by the smell of sacrifices offered by such unhallowed hands. There in the hidden recesses of the heart of the people they worked and laboured, silently but incessantly gathering, pre-

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paring, accumulating, drawing from out of all the misery, disintegration, and disease of the present the sap and the strength for a new birth, a new period, a complete regeneration. And at last the cruel winter ended, and there blossomed over the sorely tried country the loveliest of springs, for which all storms and tempests were perhaps the necessary labour and travail. The T'ang dynasty came to the throne.

CHAPTER IV

THE T'ang dynasty came to the throne. The greatest period of later China broke through at last, out of the black of a starless night, out of the red of an angry and reluctant dawn.

Once more there was a real Emperor; the mandate of Heaven no longer a disembodied influence, but set up on high, a banner of righteousness and justice, an ensign of national concord and security. And all that had been rent asunder was welded together, all that had been overthrown built up again. In politics, in art, in poetry, in industry, trade, in every branch of healthy human activity, a stupendous resurgence of life. For the vigour of spring throbbed once more in the pulse of the nation, and the joy of its music sang in every heart.

With T'ai Tsung, the second of the T'ang rulers, all the greatness of the ancient Model Emperors seemed to be revived, with the additional grace and polish of an age supreme in refinement of manners, delicacy of feeling, sureness of artistic perception.

It was his military genius that won the throne for his father. Moving about swiftly with a body of well disciplined troops, sternly kept from oppressing the people, he crushed one after another the whole brood of ambitious adventurers who in no less than eleven parts of the country

had set up their independent courts, mere centres of extortion and voluptuousness, impervious to all consideration for the general welfare. At last, after five years of marching and battling, the forces of evil which had stood up in the pride of overwhelming numbers and resources were broken and defeated. Victory fell to the just cause, the cause of a strong, united China, free from foreign aggression, purged from internal discord. Li Shi Min, as Tai Tsung was called before his accession, returned in triumph to his father, Kaou Tsou's capital.

On war-worn horses the victorious troops rode up the wide avenue leading to the palace, the banner of the Azure Dragon on the left, that of the White Tiger on the right, and innumerable pennants and standards fluttering vivid brightness of device and colours above the dazzling glitter of tall spears.

Then booty—stone-throwers, state-umbrellas, chariots, broken banners, broken humans, the irreconcilables among the defeated, flotsam of long years of warfare, dazed even out of all external semblance of what men should be, dragging along reluctant feet, all the frenzy for slaying and plunder, which they had so gleefully sated on the living flesh of others, now caged up in their own tissues, devouring their own body, consuming their own blood.

And more soldiers on foot, scarred, wind-beaten—the stains of many battles, the mud of many bivouacs, eaten deep into their accourrements, but in their tramp the ringing rhythm of success, on their faces the glow of gratitude for being still alive on this wondrous earth, for breathing once again the sweet familiar air of home.

And further booty—things that had shot forth death, brandished defiance, symbolized power, trundled along a public thoroughfare, mere toys for the stare and vanity of idle gapers.

And yet more cavalry—one steady, forward motion, rank after rank of horses and riders bright with glint of steel, with sheen of velvet saddlery and gloss of well-groomed buttocks.

Suddenly, like sharp forked lightning kindling the whole length of the procession, spraying jets of music over the heads of the crowd into the windows of the houses, above the highest roof-tops away into the sky, the thunder of a thousand drums, gongs, bells, the clarion call of trumpets, the shrillness of fifes—the march of the victor, the anthem of peace. Its mighty chords, its triumphant harmonies, beat upon the hearts of the multitude, thrilled them and swept them up in one whirl of exultation: Li Shi Min!

And Li Shi Min rode into view, his armour shimmering with gold, his keen-edged sword at rest in a scabbard chiselled and studded with gems like some hallowed jewel; in his eyes the infinite look of one who has gazed much on danger, death, and desolation without ever forgetting the shame and the pity and the sorrow of it all; of a man who longed and laboured for victory, not because his soul was parched with vainglorious lust of conquest, hate-maddened desire for revenge, but because all the suffering of war-cursed humanity wept and agonized within his blood, because out of the fullness of his visions he ached to give the world the light of peace and goodwill, the joy of reason, charity, and justice.

And he had won, alone against a multitude.

Behind him, bound in chains, the forces of disorder princes, ministers, generals, who from greed, fear, vindictiveness, or mere restlessness, because the sound of fighting was in the air, the smell of blood on every wind, the chance of plunder flung open to all, had enkindled war and kept it blazing by dragging ever more victims into the sinister orbit of its glow. Now they were bound, the war-fire beaten down, the beauteous work of healing already begun. As Li Shi Min rode past them, the crowds on either side felt the presence of something great and strong and true, and dimly, in the manner of crowds, they were filled with a wondering reverence.

He rode forward, on to the temple of his ancestors—away from the thousand eyes that had held him, into the blind presence of the dead, who held no one and who yet owned everything.

Even as the tender law of filial piety ordained, he came to tell them of his many victories. Out in the glare and movement of the street, these had seemed so great, so worth the telling. There in the quiet of the shrine, the blue-grey film of incense-smoke curling dreamily out of the roundness of old copper bowls, across tablets on which were written the names of those who, once as vigorous as he, now were gone so utterly out of the sunshine their own grandson could not reconstruct their looks, nor recall the least faint whisper of their voice, all worldly triumphs grew strangely light, weighed as little as the trivial matters that end the very hour they are born. What was the utmost best one man could do compared to the calm immensity of death? Yet against that solemn background the best alone was bearable.

He laid his head upon the ground in gratitude, because the lessons of unyielding perseverance, of fearless devotion to the public good, his ancestors transmitted to him had matured into fame and power—in humility, because victory had been hard to win, because defeat had ever hovered close beside it, was waiting even now for any unwise exultation, any weariness in well-doing and watchfulness. The Spirits had been true to him; he vowed he would be true to them, make the name which they had given him shine with a great radiance through all time. And as he lifted up his face again, all that he had ever felt of the beauty, might, and sacredness of earth, all that the stress and horror of the war years had whipped and burnt into his soul, merged into a firm resolve never to base power on the brutal right of conquest, with its trail of fear, loathing, simmering revolt, but only on the most irresistible of all claims, disinterested benevolence.

None should triumph, none be trodden under.

There must be a great forgiving and a great forgetting, all faces resolutely turn from the baneful black of night towards the joyous dawn of day; that all hands, coarsened and wearied with destruction, grow strong again and pliant, constructing, building up, creating a world truly great and rich and human at last.

And what Li Shi Min dreamt in the simple hall of his ancestors, T'ai Tsung carried out in the splendour of the Dragon Throne. He had to use considerably more severity than he would have chosen. The powers of evil can never all be bound in chains; always a few escape, and their rate of increase is mostly terribly swift. The exigencies of bad frontiers, continually pressed on by powerful and aggressive neighbours, necessitated some more campaigns. A daughter had to be given in marriage to the ruler of Tibet to secure the friendship of its hungry mountaintribes. But on the whole the Fates were kind and allowed him to carry out his lofty principles of government. Like

all the eminent rulers of the Middle Kingdom he was an ardent student and believer in the principles of K'ung-fu-tsze.

Once he wrote in a proclamation:

"Filial piety is the foundation of all virtues"—taking filial piety in the wide Confucian sense of an humble reverence towards the source and prime sustenance of human life.

"I will make it my chief care to increase the prosperity of my subjects, so that parents may be better able to bring up their children properly, and the children on their side more easily fulfil their duties towards their parents, and that with the increase of the virtue of filial piety all other virtues may flourish anew. To impress on the people how much I have this at heart, I order that in every district there be given in my name and at my expense, to all who are noted for their filial piety, five measures of rice; to all who are over eighty years of age, two measures; to nonogenarians, three; the same to centenarians, with the addition of two rolls of stuff. Further, beginning with the first moon, let one measure of rice be granted to every woman who gives birth to a male child. Those whom the calamities of the times have driven from their homes are to be induced to return, their farms being restocked and a fresh start on their former footing offered them."

Old-age Pensions, the endowment of Motherhood, things whereof Europe is just only taking thought, enacted by a Chinese Emperor as the result of no other study than that of the Chinese Classics and of the fundamental needs of society.

Magistrates were further enjoined to allow the heroes

of filial piety the distinction of having "filial piety" written in large characters on the threshold of their door.

Strange that Western Europe, with its need for societies for the prevention of cruelty to children, should have dared to force its missionaries on a people who thus delighted in honouring the kindly virtues of peace, virtues of far more enduring value and requiring far greater steadfastness in self-control and courage than the brief valour of the battlefield, the only one on which Christian monarchs lavish decorations with any profusion. Fortunately T'ai Tsung was not molested by the unwarranted presumptions to which the later Manchu Emperors had to submit, though Christian missionaries of the Nestorian doctrine did make their first appearance in China in his reign. A stone tablet put up for their glorification has survived to this day. But its peculiar theology made no impression. The level of education and intelligence was exceedingly high in China just then, and T'ai Tsung did much to spread the understanding of the great old Classics. Large halls were set apart within the very precincts of his palace for scholars, students, books. At stated hours of certain days the public was admitted to hear commentaries on the canonical texts-commentaries sometimes given by the Emperor himself. He also founded an academy, endowed a college holding over ten thousand pupils. Foreign princes gladly sent their sons there to be instructed in Chinese ethics, Chinese erudition.

The way was prepared for the magnificent literary and artistic blossoming for which the T'ang dynasty will always remain famous. And this blossoming was due not only to the multiplication of books, to the opening of schools and colleges, but to the splendid liberalism

which T'ai Tsung breathed into the State. The outward forms of his government may have been despotic, but his subjects, being intellectually alive, put a good deal more liberty into this so-called despotism than an intellectually torpid people obtains from a parliamentary government, however much theoretically fashioned on the most democratic pattern.

It was a great work of reconstruction and creation that he set himself and his people to do. Roads were made or repaired, canals dug, marshes drained. A well equipped and highly disciplined army provided the shelter behind which the peasant could reap what he had sown, the craftsman give full scope to his industry, the artist to his inspiration. The penal code was simplified, punishments reduced, and public security increased. The extreme penalty was no longer inflicted with the recklessness war engenders in all latitudes. The taking of a human life, however guilty, was recognized as a grave and solemn act, not to be inflicted lightly, but to be surrounded by every possible safeguard against haste and injustice. Before confirming a death sentence, T'ai Tsung enacted that the Emperor should observe three whole days of abstinence, fasting, and meditation. So greatly did he dread the guilt of cutting short the days of any fellowcreature.

His death-bed injunctions to his son were:

"Be just, but above all things be humane.

"Rule your passions, and you will easily rule the hearts of your subjects. Your good example will do far more than rigorous enactments would to make men fulfil their duties.

[&]quot;Be sparing with punishments, generous with rewards.

"Never put off till to-morrow a boon you could confer at once, but postpone the infliction of punishments till you are absolutely certain they are really deserved."

Such was the spirit he infused into public affairs. Being the true expression of the ideal cherished for centuries in the silence of the people's soul, not merely the lipeloquence of the latest theoretical fancy, T'ai Tsung's spirit was well maintained for many decades, though none of his successors approached his greatness even from afar. The worst of them were weaklings who floundered, under the double weight of immense moral responsibility and temptations equally overwhelming towards complete immorality. The best of them were poets and artists, mostly wise enough to select honest and independent men for the real work of government. They did not do much to strengthen the dynasty, but the murmur of their sorrows, the fervour of their passion, still haunts the world with exquisite poetry, and the art which they encouraged set up models of beauty which can never pass away.

Nevertheless, by a lamentable fatality, so recurrent as to seem a law rooted in the nature of things, the T'ang dynasty, so glorious in its dawn and its meridian, set in the dark, shameful clouds of extravagance, favouritism, murders, intrigues, plottings, poisonings. Again there was eunuch tyranny, followed by eunuch massacres; the loosening of discipline in the army, growing contempt of the central power among the great provincial governors. As the imperial court drifted into weakness and fatuity, alternately under the dominion of eunuchs, of Buddhist bonzes, or of ambitious generals, often of barbarian origin, the self-seeking forces of disruption, never more than dormant, sprung up wide-awake and ready once again

to tear the Empire to pieces, that each might filch a fraction to prey on and devour.

Ominous from North and West the might of Tartars, Turks, and Khitans was gathering and swelling ready to join in the scramble for the dissolving dominions of the T'angs. The last of the dynasty, son of an assassinated Emperor, was raised to the throne and kept there trembling for two years by his father's murderer. Then he too was hustled off to the Yellow Springs, and the slayer of two Emperors took to himself the names of Son of Heaven, founder of a new dynasty, Emperor. Only the names. The reality of these great things was beyond the reach of his bloodstained hands. His own brother called him a base-born thief and rebel, and his own son put an end to his pernicious career.

This parricide was in his turn murdered by his brother, not so much to avenge the father as to seize the father's inheritance. No blessing went with it. He is known as Mo Ti, the last of his line. Another aspirant to imperial power made war on him-a savage, inhuman war to a finish. Apparently he understood the art of slaying men, of burning towns and villages, better than the man he wanted to dispossess. As the enemy army were scaling the walls of his capital, Mo Ti, the pitiful monarch of a sombre hour, wept and asked to be killed by his attendants. Which they did-with how much readiness is not related. So the curtain was rung down on this blood-andthunder melodrama, which is not even interesting, as all the chief actors are villains and the thrill of the oppressed but finally triumphant hero is sadly lacking. It took seventeen years to act.

The victor was of Turkish descent. Aliens in high

places—such was the penalty the Sons of Han had to pay for having acquiesced in the corruptions of the eunuch system, in the enervating superstitions and the heavy expense of a degraded type of Buddhist monasticism, in the practical neglect of their own ancient standards of right and wrong. And these aliens were but half civilized. One of the rulers of their intrusive dynasty could not even read the language of the people he presumed to govern. Without roots in the country, it fell at the first determined attack made on it by another adventurer. But this new Emperor deriving his main strength from the protection of the Khitans, a Tungusic tribe which had seized the whole of Northern China, the change was scarcely one for the better.

With so many foreign ambitions eating their way into the highest government organs, political life grew feverish, and every governor of any wealth and influence, every general of any standing, became a prey to delirious dreams of paramount power. The device of an elective presidentship, whereby this delirium can be more or less tamed by agreeing to its periodic recurrence at specified intervals, had not yet been evolved, and the poor Chinese, deprived of this magic panacea for all social ills, were handed over from one dynasty to another, and duly fleeced and mismanaged by no less than five dynasties (so-called) within the space of only half a century. Till at last one better fitted for rule, its talents not outrun by its ambition, was whirled up to the surface and proved more than the glittering bubble of a moment.

Much more, in fact. In the world of art, philosophy, learning, industry, the Sung dynasty is the rich, warm summer ripening the fruit and flowers of the springtide that was so bright and glorious under the early T'angs. Although, as far as the frontiers were concerned, the evil results of the political and military inefficiency of the last T'angs and of the five dynasties' period could not be wholly obliterated and a slow but ominous shrinkage went on along all the borders, yet throughout the three centuries during which the mandate of Heaven rested on the Sung dynasty, the people of China enjoyed to the full the blessings of a wise and humane government. For Chao K'uang Yin, called T'äi Tsou as the first Emperor of the line, laid the foundations deep and well, not on the shifting sands of violence and mere brute force, but on the solid rock of the loyalty of the leaders and the affection of the people. The gates of his palace were kept open always towards the four quarters of the sky, that the Emperor's dwelling-place might ever be as open to the supplications of the burdened and oppressed as was his heart.

"Man's life," he often said, "is the most precious thing on earth. When depriving any one of this priceless gift one should exercise the utmost caution, so as to make quite sure one is doing so only in absolute consonance with law, justice, or direst necessity."

Accordingly, he deprived provincial governors of the right of carrying out death sentences before these had been revised at a central appeal tribunal in the capital. And he did much to ennoble and beautify the lives of which he was such a jealous guardian. Everywhere schools and colleges were re-endowed or newly established, ignorance sternly discouraged where it often is most at home—in the army. The literary examination which the T'angs had made the indispensable qualification for all civil service appointments was extended to army officers.

The canonical books were republished. Indeed, throughout the Sung period the printing of old books, the reproducing and gathering, the tabulating and collecting of the records of the past, the summing up of the thought and experience of the centuries in comprehensive systems of philosophy, in monumental volumes of history, the copying and continuing of the masterpieces of the T'ang artists, went on with a feverish activity-like the hurried gathering home of the harvest when stormclouds ride up blacker and blacker upon the horizon; like the locking up of treasures spread about with careless profusion during sunny times of safety when the unchained dogs of war send forth their first ominous howl; like the closing of doors and shutters, the battening down of hatches over precious cargo, when the typhoon is felt to be near, ready at any moment to burst forth and to destroy.

Almost all the Sung Emperors were generous patrons of scholars and artists, and endeavoured to live up to the rulers' decalogue which a wise old minister had presented to one of them:

- (I) Fear Heaven.
- (2) Love the people.
- (3) Perfect virtue.
- (4) Study wisdom.
- (5) Favour merit.
- (6) Accept advice.
- (7) Reduce taxation.
- (8) Moderate punishments.
- (9) Avoid extravagance.
- (10) Ban self-indulgence.

It was not inner corruption that brought about their fall, but overwhelming pressure from without. Through-

out its history the Middle Kingdom never succeeded in securing to itself an absolutely impregnable northern and western frontier line. And, like modern Germany, it had always much to fear and endure from the restless militancy of powerful neighbours. Even that mighty construction the Great Wall provided only a respite, not immunity from invasion. Safety depended entirely on the strength of the army. Under energetic warders of the marches during feudal times, under capable Emperors in the time of centralization inaugurated by Shi Huang Ti, the danger was kept at bay, but at any slackening of the defence, out it leapt again from the depths of its unassailable steppes to pour all the horrors of war and conquest over the luckless Chinese.

In the disorganized times after the eclipse and disappearance of the T'ang dynasty the whole of Northern China had been conquered by the Khitans. The ablest of the Sung Emperors tried to dispossess them, realizing that the truncated China they ruled, deprived of its most valuable recruiting ground among the sturdy Northern Chinese, had been dangerously weakened. They failed and gradually slipped into a state of feeble resignation, giving what was called a present, but really was tribute, to their unwelcome neighbours: 300,000 rolls of silk, 300,000 taels of silver. Little, if it could really succeed in buying immunity from aggression; too much if it helped to strengthen the enemy in his designs of annexation.

As so often happens, a short-sighted diplomacy, fancying itself full of deep cunning, only added to the dangers of a terribly critical situation. To crush the nearest enemy, the Chins, it played at that tricky game of an entente

with a more distant but vastly more formidable Power. With the result that though the immediate foe was overthrown, the Mongols gained a firm footing inside the Great Wall, whence they could pour down over China the whole man-power of the steppe, drilled by the colossal energy and the stupendous military genius of Jenghis Khan into an instrument of conquest which for speed, efficiency, and the wide range of its activity has only been rivalled since by the British Navy. Also like the British Navy, it was not self-defence or the need to rectify dangerously open frontiers that started it on its victorious career-just exuberance of the will to power, which found the home horizon too narrow for its full display, insatiable desire for riches more rapidly acquired by seizing or gaining control over the wealth created by others than by tamely sitting down and through the toil and thrift of generations producing it oneself. Both made havoc of the old dreamy peace of Asia, both with the swiftness and precision of their blows knocked down ancient thrones and dynasties like so many ninepins. Neither brought much other compensation for all this upheaval, this excessive humiliation of weak States, than a firm control over local quarrels and a marked increase in the extent and ease of international communications. This benefited trade, though in both cases it is at least doubtful whether the great decline in the purchasing power among the subjugated races was quite made up by its rise among the conquerors. The atrocious ruthlessness of the Mongol army (therein differing completely from the British Navy, which never destroys more than is indispensable for ensuring victory) must have reduced the amount of wealth available for distribution by quite go per cent. Under the hoof of

their cavalry, Western Asia and Eastern Europe became a smoking wilderness of ruins. Bokhara, once a centre of science, was reduced to ashes, Merv sacked and burned. At Nishapur, of a population of many thousands none were suffered to live except four hundred artisans. And these were dragged away to do work for the Mongols they were too ignorant to do themselves. Of Persia, Marco Polo writes:

"Persia was in old times very illustrious and powerful, but now the Tartars have wasted and destroyed it."

"Camadi was formerly a great and noble place, but now is of little consequence, for the Tartars in their incursions have several times ravaged it."

"In former days there were plenty of inhabited places on the road, but now there are none, and you meet with only a few people looking after their cattle at pasture."

Probably travellers passing through Europe a few years hence, when the peace of exhaustion has settled down upon it, will describe it in very similar terms.

Of Eastern Tibet he writes:

"After five days' march you enter a province that has been sorely ravaged. This was done in the wars of Maugn Khan. There are indeed towns and villages and hamlets, but all harried and destroyed. . . . Travellers make big fires with pieces of bamboo to protect themselves and their cattle from the wild beasts which have so greatly multiplied since the devastation of the country and prevent it from being reoccupied."

And he is a friendly witness, dazzled by the magnificence of the Khan's court and by no means inclined to inquire very closely as to how all the splendour came to shine there. By a vast encircling movement the Mongols made sure of Northern China, of Yunan, Tibet, Tongking, before wholly unmasking their designs on the Sung Empire. Yet a capable government could easily have divined them and prepared for defence in time. For against such overwhelming odds, such masses of troops, such deep-laid and well concerted schemes of attack, with a recruiting ground extending from the Yellow Sea to Poland, from Northern Siberia to the Indus and the Persian Gulf, nothing less than years of the most strenuous preparation could have secured to the defence even a chance of success.

Unfortunately, the Chinese, thus threatened from north and west, even from the eastern seaboard, as the Mongols possessed a powerful fleet, had no Frederick the Great to ward off disaster. Li Tsung, who ascended the Dragon Throne in 1225, the very year in which the Mongols had turned Ho Hsia, a kingdom of North-western China, into a wilderness "strewn with corpses," was a believer in a policy of drift. He called it Taoism, but its true source was probably far less the teaching of the ancient sage than a lack of energy, a laziness of disposition which the exquisite but over-luxurious surroundings of the Imperial Palace, its elegant routine of picturesque ceremonial duties, of infinitely varied pleasures, tended to foster. He died in 1264, only three years after Kublai, the ablest of Jenghis Khan's grandsons, had, by defeating and slaying a brother, established himself on that throne round which his grandfather had heaped the gold of much loot.

If Li Tsung had believed in drift, Tu Tsung, his successor, believed in something even more fatal—pleasure. No doubt he saw the impending danger. It had already

reached such alarming dimensions it could not be overlooked. But the only moral he drew therefrom was "Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow thou shalt die." The time and the funds that should have been spent on strengthening what defences there were went off in futile fireworks of personal indulgence. They lasted nine years; then Tu Tsung died, perhaps glad to be called away while fireworks had not yet become an absolute impossibility.

"Après moi le déluge!"

And it came, black, terrible, all-engulfing, more swiftly than the Revolution after Louis XV's Parc aux Cerfs. At once—indeed, the siege of Hsiang Yang and Pan Ch'eng, begun by the Mongols in 1268, terminated adversely for the Chinese in 1273. With the fall of these two cities the road lay open to the capital. No second line of defence seems to have been prepared—clearly fireworks could no longer be carried on as usual. Even children had to stop playing. So Ti Tsung's futile life fizzled out completely, and one of his sons, Ti Hien, a poor mite of ten, was called away from his games and placed on the Dragon Throne, now nothing but a post of danger, a stepping-stone to Calvary. The mourning that was put on him for his father was soon to deepen into mourning for his whole empire.

His grandmother as regent attempted to conciliate the Mongol—offered to accept any conditions, short of complete destitution, which he chose to dictate.

But Kublai Khan was out to "crush" Chinese independence. "Rule Mongolia" was not to be interrupted by any such impertinence as a Chinese national anthem. So wave upon wave of Tartar horsemen was let loose over the fertile plains of China. Huge catapults, mangonels,

ballistas, which had overcome the two guardian fortresses, were dragged up against the walls of other populous and thriving cities. They could fling stones weighing 166 lb. and made holes seven to eight feet deep. They were constructed by Persians. Munitions of war seem already then to have been a cosmopolitan business, possibly more profitable to the makers than to the unfortunate humans against whom they directed their deadly shots.

Gates shook, walls crumbled; famine came, pestilence then the Mongols swarmed in, and the streets ran with blood. An easy thing to write—a horrible thing to picture. Among the litter of loot, smashed and torn and trampled on, because found useless or too heavy to carry awaybehind broken doors, gutted houses, huddled up in terrified heaps, crawled into the darkness of cellars, corners, courtyards, cisterns, the killed, the half-killed, and a remnant of living, crazed with hunger, anguish, terror. Out in the open streets, stench, loathsomeness, and a red sickening mush of what once had been useful, contented human beings. On either side, ruins: the dwellings of the humble. the palaces of the great, the temples of the gods, burned, pillaged, desecrated—the high road of war, the Tartar steam-roller ploughing its progress over the most industrious, most honest population of the world.

Some troops remained to tighten the grip of possession; most swept on to the next town, and the next. And what had been resistance turned to panic, flight, suicide, surrender. The Empress-Regent and the boy Emperor—perhaps hoping thereby to save further bloodshed—gave themselves up to the conqueror, were sent off prisoners northwards to Khan Baligh, where they are said to have died. There was nothing left to live for. Their surrender

had been useless. Kublai wanted more even than the military and political extinction of the Chinese Empire; he wanted permanent physical control over the sources of its wealth, control of all the dues payable by the vast trade between the Southern Chinese harbours, India, and the Levant; control over pearl-fisheries, gold-mines, coppermines, etc.—in short, over all those things the desire for which, unfortunately for the peace and righteousness of the world, sharpens men's swords and loads their catapults far more effectively and frequently than genuine patriotism unalloyed by lust for gain. And patriotism, love of freedom, was all the Chinese had to sustain them in the increasingly uneven struggle they kept up for another three years against the bitter war to a finish which the winning power declared was the only one that would satisfy him.

He got it.

With the inevitable result that he cut away all the ground on which the foundations of a lasting reconstruction of that part of Asia could have been established. The extreme humiliation he inflicted on the Chinese filled them with such undying hatred for their conquerors that they never would, never could rest till they had swept them out of their country, deprived them of every one of their Chinese conquests, beaten them hard in their own home-land, and left that branch of the Mongols poorer and of less account than they had been before their meteoric and wholly immoral career of conquest. However, as usual, retribution only overtook their descendants, not the perpetrators of the crimes against the unfortunate Sung Empire. And Kublai Khan had no gift of prophecy, not even a statesman's foresight. He was out for plunder,

out to make his domination over Asia as complete as domination merely based on force can make it. The impermanence of such a sovereignty probably never occurred to him. Nor could his semi-savage brain, only dimly lit by a few distorted beams of Buddhism (Tibetan Buddhism) have grasped the idea that it is an act of criminal folly to give uncontrolled vent to lust of power, thirst for conquest in a world full of old-established claims, many founded on the peaceful labour of generations of toilers. He felt no pangs of conscience, no need for hypocrisy. At least it is not recorded of him that he called his fight for the monopoly of Asiatic trade-routes, his attack on the independence of a highly cultured people, a disinterested crusade for such rhetorical phantasms as liberty, justice, civilization. No war can inflict anything but the most grievous harm on real liberty, real justice, real civilization. For their sake it would have been far better if the Mongol hosts had got scattered in the sands of their deserts before they ever set foot on Chinese soil.

Justice was on the side of the Chinese, who were fighting for their independence, their right to live according to laws and customs of their own making under a dynasty of their own choosing, on territory developed by the labour of their own ancestors. So was civilization. The country was prosperous, the people happy and properly cared for, with good schools for the young, large, well-endowed hospitals and asylums for the sick, the needy, and the aged; the standard of honesty so high, so widely diffused, there were no malefactors; doors were left unlocked and unbolted at night even in houses and shops that were full of riches.

But the powerfully armed hordes of the steppe were stronger than civilization, the splendidly equipped Mongol fleet mightier than justice. In vain did the devoted general Lu Hsin Fu attempt to hold off the peril. could only delay, he could not prevent the hideous doom. Another Chinese prince, Tuan Tsung, a brother of the last Emperor, also a mere boy, was made Son of Heaven. But, as happens in days of tragedy so great and apparently so undeserved they seem inexplicable and lie on entire populations like a pall in which all is darkness, weight, and agony, heaven had grown distant-legendary. The reality was war, battle, slaughter, wounds, defeat, flight. And another rally, another battle, more slaughter, woundings, flight, defeat. And so on for months-years. The line of defence driven ever further south, growing ever thinner, weaker, till in the extremity of its peril it took to the sea-fled to an island. The Emperor was on board. But even the sea turned against the lost cause. A typhoon blew-they were shipwrecked, the Son of Heaven nearly drowned, but somehow rescued, somehow dragged back to safety. But death was behind him, in him. The hardships and horrors had been too great. The poor startled eyes into which the sun had never shone except through a quivering mist of pain and tears closed from utter weariness.

If conscious life meant nothing but fight, defeat, flight, and fear, unconsciousness was better. So he sank back into it gladly, as though it were a soft, warm bed that had been waiting for him all through the day.

Now there was but one Sung prince left—Ti Ping—such a little one, just seven years old: the lovely age when babyhood still lingers in the rounded outline of the

cheeks, the softness of the skin, the mobile laughter of the mouth, while boyhood gleams frank and fearless in the eyes, throbs and burns in the impetuous current of the blood.

He thought it grand when one day they all bowed down before him, and he was allowed to sit on the beautiful red lacquer chair which he remembered used to stand under a great embroidered baldachin in the palace—the palace from which he and his brother had once been taken in the middle of the night, and hurried away into carriages and the curtains drawn close and no word spoken—only the flare of a few torches round the steel of the horses' hoofs, the silver of the harness, and the gleam of a few cold stars over the sombre gateway. Some one had clung to his hand and cried over it—an old woman, he thought; he was so sleepy he had forgotten who it was—then they drove away into the darkness. Somehow they seemed to have been driving away into the darkness ever since.

Why?

They should have stayed in the palace. It was a beautiful palace. He could picture parts of it still: the lovely gardens with a Phœnix Hill and a Cliff of the Crescent Moon, and cloud-climbing grottoes just made for playing hide-and-seek, with a maze of rockeries where one pretended to be brigands, and from which one rushed out at the ahmas and made them scream. And there were marble courtyards with deep basins of white jade, full of goldfish which he never could catch, they darted about so swiftly, and their big round eyes were wide open always. And there were passages—endless passages, with the sunshine gleaming on the bright satin of his jacket, deliciously mellowed through transparent silk painted all over with

birds and butterflies and blossoms. And rooms, and rooms, and rooms; some so large he never dared stray into them alone. They had huge pillars rising massive from the ground and losing themselves in the deep carving of the ceiling, so high above his head, so rich with gold and strange coiling creatures, he wondered whether it was the beginning of fairyland or the threshold of the house of God.

And on the walls, on a background of gold, faces and imperial robes. He knew they were imperial because his father wore just the same. But those painted Emperors seemed to fill theirs better. They held themselves very straight, and their eyes followed him from one end of the hall to the other, as if they wanted to ask him something, or reproach him for something. Then he felt ashamed he was so small. But there was one he liked, one of whom he never was afraid. He was kneeling before an altar, with tall trees behind him and men bearing long white banners. He was praying. And he could look right into the heart of little boys and was sorry when they were unhappy, because he was so dreadfully unhappy himself -and yet so strong and so wise: he seemed to know everything there was in books and ever so much more besides.

A voice above the little prince said:

"This is T'ang, the great Emperor T'ang, he who was ready to die to save his people."

Was that what it was to be Emperor? To be ready to die for one's people—he couldn't fancy his father dying thus. There was so much laughter and music round him, as if the sun were always shining. T'ang's way of being Emperor seemed different—more like what one felt like

when one looked at the stars and wondered where they ended, and who counted them all and who that "I" was, that seemed to have black walls right round it and yet was able to see that stars were very beautiful. If ever he should be Emperor he should choose T'ang's way, not his father's, though it was nice to laugh, and dying was surely very horrid. But T'ang did not really die, at least not till he was very, very old and it didn't matter.

And now he himself was Emperor. And everybody knelt down before him, and everybody would have to obey him, which was a capital arrangement. He would order them to take him back to the beautiful palace, where the picture was of T'ang, and the goldfish, and the cloud-climbing grottoes. But when he told Lu Hsin Fu, he looked grave—"The palace had been stolen, the palace, the land, the people—everything—by the Mongols, already owners of half the world."

"Then we must fight them."

"If we had the soldiers—they have thousands, and ships as well."

They had—huge ships, enormous galleys, triumphant pennants streaming from their masts, sails full of wind and boisterous sunlight. Climbing to the tower on the crest of a hill, one could see them on the edge of the horizon—dozens—a vast semicircle laid all round them.

From which there was no escape.

They were blockaded—prisoners; prisoners on short rations—half rations, and less, and ever less.

It may be a glorious thing for a powerful fleet to do, to blockade men struggling for their independence, starving them into submission. Great fleets have done so before the days of the Mongols—before, and since. But it is a kind of glory that inspires no song, stimulates to no fresh deeds of heroism. The Chinese starved—but they did not submit. Kublai Khan in one of his many palaces, rising from an enormous repast of pheasants, ducks, turkeys, kumiss, honey, and wine, may have wondered impatiently how much longer those accursed Sungs could manage to subsist on a few pomelloes and a handful of rice. Of course the day came when there was not even that much for all. Hunger grew gigantic, cutting with a thousand sharp knives, blotting out everything, the sunshine and the brightness of the sea, and hope and the desire to live; after a while, even the desire for food. All was nausea, weakness, giddiness.

They had a few ships left—remnants battered, half-broken by battle and storm. Desperately they tried to cut a way through the inexorable blockade—failed, dissolved into wreckage and corpses drifting uselessly, helplessly, over the long undulations of the infinite sea.

Breathless, keen-eyed, the little Emperor had watched the fight from a junk at anchor in the bay; knew how it had gone, knew that men were perishing there. From the Mongol galleys well manned boats began moving towards the island—they were coming, coming to drag him away, as they had dragged away his brother. A cold, cruel hand seemed to twist his heart-strings, parch his mouth, knock all the strength out of his limbs.

Was it fear? But he was Emperor, and emperors never feared.

Li Hsin Fu came towards him. There was no need for him to speak. The child knew—he had come to tell him he must die. He was small and weak, but he was ready, as T'ang had been ready, the great T'ang with the beautiful sad eyes.

Lu Hsin Fu took him in his arms, and his tears fell hot and bitter over the Emperor's hands. He carried him to where the poop of the ship rose eight feet high above the glassy mirror of the bay.

"My beloved master, look at the waves, how they sparkle and glitter in the sun; those are the scales of the wonderful blue dragon, who dwells in a lovely cave at the bottom of the sea. The moon goes there when it is waning, and the sun when it has set on earth, and in that cave, made of opal moonstones and of milk-white jade, he guards the great night-shimmering pearl, the pearl that gleams with all the colours of the rainbow and all the glory of the stars. He who touches it can never die, never again taste sorrow. Some men call it happiness, but emperors call it honour. It is far down in the water, below the whole bitter blue sea, but if we two dive for it, we shall find it, and it will be ours always."

"Shall we live in the dragon's cave then?"

"Yes, master, in his beautiful cave. There are flowers there, big, shining flowers like stars, and sea-gulls, and music."

"And goldfish?"

"Goldfish and silverfish, and down there they can speak. All things which seem dumb to us on earth will speak to us—yonder."

"And will there be nice things to eat?"

"There is no hunger there nor thirst. Have no fear, I will be with you, my beloved master. I will serve you endlessly, better than I did here."

The child looked down into the bright blue water.

It tingled with multitudinous flecks of sparkling gold, just like the scales of a long lithe body gleefully uncoiling in the warmth of the sun.

"Can we see the cave from here?"

"No, we must jump on to the back of the dragon; he will carry us to his palace—to his palace of opal moon-stones and milk-white jade, and to the great night-shimmering pearl."

Ti Ping locked his little thin arms tighter round the General's neck. His heart was beating violently. He wanted to scream, but that might have frightened the dragon away and the Mongols might have heard.

"Let us go," he whispered, and shut his eyes.

Lu Hsin Fu clasped him closer, with all the strength of his devotion. A shuddering leap—a splash—circles widening, breaking, dissolving—smoothness again and indifference where the waters closed over the small white face—the waters and the myriad flecks of glittering gold.

And there with the last of the Sungs the glory of ancient China perished, for none was left to wail towards the four quarters of the sky:

"Come back, O Son of Heaven, come back!"

CHAPTER V

KUBLAI KHAN had won. In the cryptic phraseology of modern diplomacy, he had realized the historic problem of the Tartar. In plainer language, he had set his cupidity to guard the commercial routes of warm Eastern and Southern seas.

His now, the whole extent of China. His the dues of its trade, the tolls of its roads, the tithes of its fields, the skill of its craftsmen, the wealth of its mines, the game of its forests, the pearls of its rivers, the silk of its looms; and woe betide any one who presumed in any way to infringe his right of possession in whatsoever he desired under the sun.

He who dared fish for pearls on his own account incontinently was killed.

He who dared dig for turquoises without an imperial permit was killed.

He who dared trap a hare or a bird within the borders of the imperial preserves was killed.

He who dared so much as keep a hawk or a pack of hounds within twenty days' journey of this sacrosanct ground, and he who, being a tradesman, mechanic, or husbandman, dared anywhere keep an animal used for the pursuit of game might be beaten to death.

In great robber empires, and few world-wide empires

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are anything else, property—and more particularly the property of the dominant caste—is always of infinitely greater value in the eyes of the law than the lives of human beings.

And were not the bodies of the Sons of Han Kublai Khan's also—to keep under whatsoever constraint it pleased him to enforce?

Woe betide him who dared be out in the streets after the great bell had clanged three times from the high tower, proclaiming unto all that three hours had gone by since sunset and that it behoved all to keep within. The night patrol forthwith marched the belated promenader into prison. In the morning he was examined by the magistrate. If considered dangerous or even suspicious, he was beaten with a stick, under which emphatic mode of admonition he occasionally expired. But, as Marco Polo naïvely remarks, this punishment avoided bloodshed and "their pious men, the lamas, say it is evil to shed blood." Human cruelty has never yet lacked the cunning to find a way round the prohibitions devised by human benevolence.

Woe also betide him who failed to inscribe the names of all the inmates of his house, even the number of the animals he kept, on a wooden tablet affixed to his frontdoor. He was punished, probably also with the stick.

Woe betide the keeper of a hostelry who did not register the names of all the travellers stopping there, and the date of their arrival and departure. He was punished.

Woe betide any citizen showing a light or a fire burning after curfew. The night patrol marked the door of a householder thus offending, and in the morning took him to the magistrate, by whom, unless he could plead a good excuse or pay an acceptable bribe, he also was punished.

And these were not paper regulations.

A vast army scattered in strong garrisons throughout the country—its officers bearing tablets of gold or copper, according to their rank, enabling them to commandeer whatever they needed or thought they needed; its soldiers, backed by the Khan's unlimited authority, guarding every bridge, watching every market, spying from lofty towers in the centre of every town, patrolling every street, galloping along every road—saw to it that prompt obedience became the first and foremost care of every citizen who valued his life. Small wonder this ubiquitous soldier attracted to himself all that immense power of hating warfare stirs up in the minds of men, and which a bitterly humiliating peace condenses in the souls of the vanquished to a passion and a ferment inevitably exploding in revolts and wars of revenge.

Yet the luckless Chinese had to give their own sons to serve four or five years in this army that held them down. For when Kublai Khan needed recruits to keep his enormous battalions up to strength, he collected the human material from wherever he liked, taking the precaution not to allow any Chinaman to serve in his native district. When called to the colours, the Chinese were drafted away to another garrison at a distance of at least a twenty days' journey from their own home. This minimized the difficulties of moulding them into unhesitatingly docile tools in the hands of the central authority. Docility was what was wanted; docility and an unending capacity for work, in order to produce the wealth which, divided into two unequal halves, wages

and taxes, allowed the workers to live-for dead men cannot work-and the rulers to feast and revel to their hearts' content, even periodically to indulge in great huntings of animals or men, for costly foreign wars are among the most exciting of sports considered worthy of a powerful dominant caste. Indeed, such pastimes, as tending to keep up the hardiness of nomad days, have been greatly lauded by historians writing at a safe distance from the ebullitions of Mongol virility. No doubt the skill and open-air exercise of hunting, the hardships and dangers of a campaign, were an invigorating change from the slothful luxury which formed the usual routine of the Great Khan's pampered aristocracy; but surely there are better methods for developing virility than the slaying of hunted creatures, the butchering of men fighting under a differently coloured banner, the looting and destroying of the homes of defenceless citizens. The wresting of arable land from the possession of ever-threatening inroads of flood, sand, bog, weed and bramble; the making of ways and bridges, harbours and cities; the creating of beauty, the fighting of disease and dirt, the bringing light and joy and healing into the thousand dark places of the world, the widening of the narrow circle of accurate knowledge, the passionate search for a deeper understanding of the mysteries of nature, for an interpretation of life ever nearer to the divine-do these not open out a field for human activity so stupendously wide as to guarantee to unnumbered generations the fullest employment of every atom of mental and muscular energy which needs outlet and exercise, if the race is to be kept virile?

Of course, into the bovine brain of the Mongol no sledgehammer on earth could have driven any such consideration, although the beautiful philosophy of benevolence and righteousness of her ancient sages had made them current in China centuries before. The destruction or the enjoyment of wealth, not the laborious task of its creation, was what attracted him, what always does attract conquerors. Having achieved that dream of modern politico-financial trusts, the reduction of half the civilized world into an enormous reservoir of soldiers and coolies under the absolute sway of a strong and efficient central government, having, in fact, gained complete mastery over the bodies of the conquered, he proceeded to attack their souls also.

Not a difficult thing to do. For he who controls the body is by no means far from controlling the soul, certainly as regards the majority. The stuff whereof martyrs are made is seldom plentiful. But it is invaluable, since out of it are shaped the inspirers of thought, the leaders of revolt against oppression and injustice. Which makes thought smell evil in the nostrils of a tyrannical government. Shi Huang Ti and Napoleon both loathed "ideologues." All despots fear them, and encourage ignorance as the only reliable breeding-ground for that servility, that moral torpor, which likes to abdicate the responsibility of self-determination into the hands of a dictator.

Wherefore it is not surprising that Chinese schools were deliberately neglected by the Mongol Jacks-in-office. A great persecution befell what was probably the most popular of national cults, Taoism. Another burning of books was inflicted on the long-suffering Chinese. Fortunately it only applied to Taoist works, many of which were no doubt saturated with the love for the miraculous, the desperate hope for everlasting individual life, which

will always obsess those to whom the inexorable greatness of universal law seems to take human needs into insufficient account.

Fortunately also the masterpiece of Taoism, the Tao Te King, the Book of the Way and of Virtue, was excepted. Presumably because its reading, which is not easy, was not spread widely enough among the people to form an efficient barrier against the influx of lama superstitions which the Mongols patronized. And it was to clear the way for these that Taoism was persecuted, not by any means because Kublai Khan objected to that accretion of foolish beliefs the teaching of Lao-Tsze had suffered in the course of time. Possibly also the wealth of Taoist monasteries and temples attracted his eyes. They had the sharpness of vision of his own gerfalcons in matters of that kind.

How much was destroyed of the beautiful poetry, the profound thought gathered by Taoist hermits in their self-sought loneliness on lofty mountains, in dreamy valleys away from the restlessness of cities and the pettiness of villages, will never be known. It is, however, safe to assume that the degradation of Taoism, its utter subserviency to Tibetan conceptions of the divine, dates from this destruction of its ancient books. For what the prophets of a religion have put down in their writings, that becomes its backbone, the standard referring to which all subsequent additions and distortions can at any time be exposed and rectified. Without it the whole religion drifts into the uncontrolled keeping of priestly hands, the stupidity of the masses and the cupidity of bonzes feeding and fattening on each other. One shudders to think what would become of Christianity if the

Gospels were destroyed and the interpretation of Christ's message were left entirely to the theological and political prejudices of the official hierarchy.

Certainly the uneducated Chinese-and the Mongol government took care that their numbers should increase rather than diminish—gained nothing by what practically amounted to a change from Taoism to Lamaism. A lama was put in charge of the spiritual welfare of the empire. A lama from Tibet dictating to a people nurtured on the ideas of Confucius and Lao-Tsze! History does make some terrible jokes. The stupefying drone of "Om mani padme um" crept into the popular temples. Loathsome representations of hell, reeking with punishments probably taken from the beatings and burnings and disembowellings of real life, pictures of future happiness taking the form of a rise in social status, in material prosperity; monstrous devils, green-faced, black-faced, red-faced, with bulging eyes, brandished swords, necklets of skulls, flattened-out enemies, all the horns and claws and sharp-fanged grin of utter savagery, entered a religion which arose out of the magic of the dawn on a lofty mountain summit, which preached gentleness and humility, the requiting of injury by kindness, which had revered the sage to whom the infinite calm of eternal principles, the final unity beyond all human good and evil, was the road to truth and virtue.

It is curious to observe a similar lapse into the malignant devilry of a frightful hell and into the vulgarity of a well-tailored heaven befall Christianity when in the early Middle Ages it was monopolized by a priesthood shepherding a population that could neither read nor write and was unskilled in abstract thinking—till Luther arose and

conquered the text-book of Christianity for the laity. Taoism still awaits its reformation; possibly it will perish in the waiting. For under the double oppression of arrogant soldiers and insolent lamas the soul of China did suffer, not destruction—that would have been impossible without complete physical annihilation of the whole race—but deterioration, a distinct loss of courage, tenderness, confidence.

With all high officials (and none but Mongols, Saracens, and a miscellaneous assortment of foreign adventurers were given important posts) setting an example of relentless exploitation and coarsest self-indulgence; with the government suspicious of the people, the people afraid of the government, an unhealthy moral atmosphere was generated, confusing the public sense of right and wrong, inclining the rulers to tyranny, the ruled to lying and subterfuge. Such is the usual result of imposing domination on an alien race. Whether they will it or not, conquests do add enormously to the conquerors' burden of responsibility. Vast spaces of earth cannot be acquired by right of the sword and no account rendered either of the manner of their annexation or of their subsequent management. Sooner or later, in the loyalty or the hatred of the conquered, in the improvement or decadence of the conquerors, strict account will be demanded, and then it will not be enough for the conquerors to plead that they have not burned many towns nor starved many children, that they have extended trade-routes, facilitated access to bigger markets. What they have got to answer is this: Has their conquest increased or diminished the number of fine, happy, physically and morally healthy humans on this earth?

Conquerors who have taught cannibals a more wholesome diet, who have drained pestilential marshes, cleared jungles, enabled thriving towns and villages to spring up where before there was nothing but the squalor and disease and ignorant terror of head-hunting savages, can stand up and proudly point to the work of their sword. It was conquest of this type which had in the old days enlarged the borders of the Middle Kingdom, and which, wherever it occurs, by whomsoever it is carried out, is not merely excusable, but necessary and beneficial both to victor and vanquished; and in the long run it will always be found that what benefits the one, benefits the other also. But those who on an equally or a more highly civilized country, with its own roads, schools, language, and traditions, impose the compulsion of their will, forcing its inhabitants into the hurdles marked out by the red tape of governors of alien birth, alien speech, alien thought. the better to fleece them for the benefit of an alien State; who by a process of inevitable attrition undermine the self-reliance, the public spirit, the moral and mental vigour of the conquered; who where there was a live community of self-respecting men create the dull stagnation of a servile provincialism—surely the work of their sword is mere havoc and desecration, though there may be no lack, there may even be an abundance of food and fine clothes and well policed arteries of communication.

It seems pretty clear that the blight of some such stagnation crept over the soul of China in the long sorrow of Mongol dominion. Indeed, it might have foundered utterly in darkness and despair if ancestor-worship and the ancient Classics had not provided it with a refuge of unassailable strength. Now the full value of the pious

work of the Sung period was weighed and found overflowing, that pious, patient work of copying, collecting, continuing, explaining, popularizing all the superb spiritual treasures bequeathed to it by the towering generations of the past. It had not been done in vain. What the Old Testament and the Talmud proved to the Jews in the bitter days of the dispersion, what their literature and their medieval past were to the Germans in the cruel humiliations inflicted on them by Napoleon's militarism, that and even more the Chinese found in the three great embodiments of the genius of the race, their ancestorworship, their classics, and their art.

No nation that has produced master-minds and kept in living touch with their works can ever be enslaved for long. How much waste of effort, how much saving of misery would be effected if politicians, training their minds to think in terms of facts instead of in terms of desire, would recognize this simple truth and cease attempting to conquer the unconquerable.

His future obscure, his present unbearable, the patriotic Chinese was really driven to dwell in the past. As he prostrated himself before the spirit-tablet of his ancestors he remembered they had been free, and their blood was his blood; as he burned incense to the memory of the sages and the emperors he recalled their greatness, and their speech was his speech.

Patience, patience—descendants of the free and the great cannot remain slaves always.

The ripe beauty of the Chinese language, the power of its literature, the splendour of Chinese art, seem to have impressed even Kublai Khan. That the conquered should be able to read and write so much more fluently

and elegantly than their masters was humiliating. In fact, these masters frequently could do neither, nor had their rough camp-life given them the manners befitting an imperial palace, the meeting-place of ambassadors from all parts of the world. Further, practical difficulties occurred in setting illiterate barbarians to govern a highly cultured people. To remedy which the services of a learned and obliging Chinaman, Hin Hung, were retained. A class of young Mongols, young enough to be considered teachable, was formed under him, and from early dawn to dewy eve he kept hammering, or trying to hammer, Chinese culture into their reluctant brains. He taught them, or tried to teach them, to speak, read, and write Chinese, to interpret the Classics, to stand, walk, sit, rise, bow and eat in correct Chinese fashion. In this latter part of the curriculum he no doubt achieved a certain measure of success-externals can be taught and learnt by dint of drill and practice, but the inner greatness of Chinese civilization, how could these uncouth usurpers acquire or even appreciate any of it? All the circumstances of their position in the country made it impossible for them to adopt as a living faith an ethical code based on benevolence and righteousness, a code evolved by free men for free men. K'ung-fu-tsze's fundamental assumption of government as a relationship of filial piety, the ruled loving and obeying the ruler as their own father. the ruler caring for the ruled with a parent's devotion and solicitude, was utterly wanting. The most the Mongols could make their own of the Chinese sages was an eloquent patter about benevolence, righteousness. virtue, and filial piety. The reality of these great and difficult things was beyond their reach.

An unfortunate result of this pseudo-Confucian varnish in which the Mongols, as later on the Manchus, loved to scintillate, was that it brought the reproach of hollowness and insincerity upon the whole teaching of the Classics, and has led some modern Europeans and, what is far worse, some modern Chinese also, to treat it as pedantic verbiage, as a positive hindrance to real learning. Great teachers should not be held responsible either for the iniquities or the ineptitudes of those who, though rendering them the most fulsome lip-service, deny them every day in deed and thought. Nor do great principles cease to be true because hypocrites quote them to hide their guilt from themselves. To say Confucianism failed, because the Tartars, while publishing edicts eloquent with benevolence, righteousness, large-minded, humane tolerance, plundered and oppressed their subjects and derived their real guidance from childish superstitions, is as futile as saying Christianity has failed because Europe periodically plunges into the saddest orgies of hate, with priests ostensibly Christian blessing shells with the sign of the Cross, with bishops claiming apostolic succession unashamedly fanning the war-spirit on the outskirts of corpse-strewn trenches, with texts torn from the Gospel of Universal Brotherhood and Love.

Patience—this brotherhood which Jesus preached will survive the hate, for it is deeper; the filial piety K'ung-fu-tsze taught will outlive Tartar oppression and demagogic anarchy, being more fundamental than either, closer than either to the permanent needs of human nature. While under the heel of the invader, the Chinese of the thirteenth century, wiser than those of the twentieth, fled to the tombs of their dead, to the records of their

bygone history, to the sweetness of their ancient songs, to the solace of their native art. Even though some of the tenets of their ancient culture might, in the language of Nietzsche, hang like a half-gnawed bone out of the mouths of their oppressors, they instinctively felt that, with their political organization in pieces, their territory in enemy hands, their material resources under alien control, their one hope of revival, their one impregnable rallying-point, was loyalty to their ancestors, devotion to the cult of their Classics.

The beautiful spirituality these taught them may also in a measure have counteracted the evil effects of that other rallying-point of the oppressed—hatred of the oppressor. There was a great deal of it—there always is. Intense hatred is the one result of a crushing victory which can safely be prophesied. And it is a power, often a power of the first magnitude. Its driving-force can become enormous, but in one direction only, the direction of destruction. It can create nothing but yet more hatred. Slashing about blindly right and left, it kills, mutilates, maligns, and what in its red rage it mistook for justice and lawful retribution turns out to have been nothing but slander, crime, murder, engendering another current of hatred hot with desire to rush upon the first in further explosions of destructive fury.

The history of the relations between the Chinese and the Tartars is sulphuric with this foul poison of hate. On the one hand, hideous slaughter of Chinese when the Tartars invade their country; on the other, abominable massacres of Tartars when the Chinese succeed in casting them forth out of their usurped places. Marco Polo states that several Mongol governors were murdered by

the Chinese. No doubt they had pushed their extortions beyond the limit of endurance of even that most patient of beasts of burden, the Chinese worker. And Kublai Khan certainly seems to have employed men against whom, to an oppressed and exasperated people, murder seemed the only weapon. In his residence of Khan Baligh he gathered round him that cosmopolitan crowd of blood-suckers which collects in every city ruling a world-empire, men with no creed but personal profit, no conscience but the fear of being found out, no common interest but the exploitation of "natives." First in numbers and prominence ranked the Saracens, who in the Middle Ages performed the services of international finance and trade now mainly rendered by the Jews.

The most notorious of these was one Achmath, for twenty-two years entrusted by Kublai Khan with powers practically unlimited so long as he kept an uninterrupted stream of wealth pouring into his master's treasury. For wealth, much wealth, was needed to carry out or to try to carry out Mongol designs on the still unconquered portions of Eastern and Southern Asia and to keep the Great Khan and his nobles arrayed in cloth of gold. Robes of cloth of gold have an unhappy way of wearing out more quickly than coverings of rags. Now Achmath, courtier, financier, administrator, tax-gatherer, Mahomedan, in the intervals of enriching himself and his employer, leered much at beautiful women-apparently three times too often. For a Chinaman, Chin Chu, on whose mother, wife, and daughter this leer with all its attendant dishonour had fallen, swore vengeance, and set a plot on foot for slaving Achmath and every Tartar for miles round. That part of the scheme missed fire. The conspirators only

succeeded in killing Achmath, and were themselves killed in great numbers. But Kublai Khan seems to have recognized that his Saracen minister had committed serious offences and deserved his fate. Or perhaps, the cunning device of extortionate death-duties not yet having been invented, he wanted an excuse for seizing the immense fortune which his murdered agent had left behind. At any rate, he ordered the miserable body to be torn out of its grave, not dark and sad enough a place to satisfy imperial wrath. The head was cut off and exposed to the gaze of the crowd, who probably knew no pity, and of the wide sky, which did, and breathed decay upon it and oblivion. The rest of the body was cast into the street for mongrels to devour. Some of his sons were flayed alive-pour encourager les autres. Such are the humours of imperial gratitude. All the treasure the disgraced favourite had accumulated in the Old City was transferred to the Great Khan's treasury in the New. It is not reported whether the abuses of which he had been acknowledged guilty were remedied. Judging by the greed and cruelty of the punishment meted out to his remains and to his family, it is more than probable that they continued, though under cover of greater cautiousness.

Marco Polo was one of those who rose up in accusation against Achmath—against the dead Achmath, when the fear of him had fallen from all tongues. Whether he did so out of abstract love of justice, pity for the sufferings of the Chinese, or to ingratiate himself with Kublai by showing him a short cut to Achmath's treasures and in order to step into the dead man's shoes, will never be known, may not have been quite clear to himself. Motives are tricky things to disentangle, the acknowledged one always

wearing a halo of the most immaculate virtue, while the hidden one-frequently the only one that has enough power to produce any action at all-may be a thing to be so ashamed of it cannot be mentioned either in public or in the secrecy of the confessional. This much is certain. that Marco Polo did not grow poor in the service of the Khan, to whom his shrewd Venetian merchant brain no doubt proved most useful for auditing and increasing his receipts from the customs and taxes wherewith the former subjects of the Sungs were now compelled to fatten the invader. He also bestowed on Marco Polo the governorship of the important city of Yung Chu. History does not record how the Chinese liked this appointment. History, like the official news in war-time, is full of such discreet silences. But one can picture how their pride must have been galled by having a governor put over them who scorned their religion as gross idolatry, who knew nothing of their language or traditions, and was solely concerned with keeping in favour with the Mongol court and with acquiring enough wealth for himself to return one day to his own country with all the honour attaching to a venture that has paid.

This ambition he was able to satisfy. When his patron, Kublai Khan, grew old, he and the two older Polos (his father and his uncle) realized that in the uncertainties of a Tartar court it might be rash to rely on an equal amount of favour from his successor. Perhaps too, having made a fortune, the head of Achmath, once the wealthiest, then the most dishonoured of men, had not grinned down on them in vain. They asked and finally obtained leave to go back to their native city.

There, at the first great banquet they gave, they appeared

in gorgeous robes of scarlet satin, which at intervals between the courses they changed for yet more splendid ones of damask, culminating in robes of crimson velvet. This was to wipe out the poor impression their travelstained and Asiatically tailored clothes had first produced on the young bloods of the Rialto. Finally, as a surprise packet for dessert, they had these offending old garments brought in, and after the servants had left the room they ripped them open, and behold a scintillation of rubies, amethysts, sapphires, diamonds, emeralds, carbuncles, turquoises, every conceivable gem, scattered on the table, plentiful as pebbles, enchanting as a jeweller's treasureshop. How many weeks of Chinese labour clung round each one of these gleaming stones—weeks of toil strenuous, unremitting, yet insufficient to provide young children and aged parents with enough food and clothing-was not a point considered by the dazzled guests. It is not to this day the kind of calculation which it would be polite to make at the dinner-parties of millionaires. This name of millionaire was forthwith bestowed on Marco Polo. In whatever way he had acquired enough wealth to deserve it, whether he had been a just governor or an unjust, he had undoubtedly been a loyal servant to Kublai Khan. He writes of him with genuine admiration, even with something like affection. Indeed, there runs a tinge as of home-sickness through the pages in which he tells of his great travels-as if the East were calling him back to its breadth and its splendour, away from the smallness and hardness of Italian city-life. The native lagoons must have seemed grey and sluggish after King Tze, the old Sung capital, with its well paved streets crowded with carriages, its eager, richly clad crowds, its hundreds of marble bridges, its lake full of brightly painted and luxuriously cushioned pleasure skiffs, its islets of flower-gardens, pavilions, and sweet-scented shrubs, its teahouses of "Pure Delight," its Gate of Limpid Water, its women exquisite in witchery of their silks, their perfumes, their wit, their smiles, the caressing lure of their voices, and their dancing.

After handling the affairs of what was then the largest empire of the world, the feuds between rival Italian merchant republics must have seemed deplorably petty, notwithstanding the noise, the fury, the persistence with which they were carried on. Nor has Europe learnt wisdom since then. It still delights in letting its blood-feuds, its envies, its trade rivalries tear it to pieces, never realizing how utterly small and foolish they actually are. For Marco Polo, war proved particularly unfortunate, as, its chances going against Venice, he was taken prisoner by the Genoese and kept in prison in Genoa for over a year. While wearily counting the slow and heavy hours of captivity, he must have longed for the vast blue sky of Northern China, the sparkle of its air, the buoyant freedom of its plains, dawn coming up resplendent from opal mists of the distant sea, sunsets fading in burnished gold behind deep lazuli shadows of western hills, or lingering rose and amethyst tinted round the sharp loneliness of the topmost peaks.

And he conjured it all up again: the Great Khan's court, his hunting expeditions, "at which he employed ten thousand falconers, some five hundred gerfalcons, peregrines, sakers, also goshawks to fly at the water-fowl"; the vast camp, creating from March to May the

stir of a brilliant city where there usually reigned the silence of an untamed solitude; the mass of tents "all fine and rich," those reserved for the imperial audiences so large they could accommodate an army. Altogether they were marvellous, these imperial tents—the ropes all made of purest silk, the poles of sandalwood gilt and carved, the outer coverings of tiger-skins "so perfectly joined neither wind nor rain could penetrate," the inner hangings of creamy white ermine, with the glossy brown of priceless sables exquisitely applied and inlaid. The Great Khan himself, reclining in a pavilion, the outside covered with tiger-skins, the inside gleaming with plates of beaten gold borne on the backs of four well trained elephants; his favourite gerfalcons close beside him, to be cast any moment in pursuit of the cranes, whenever the attendant barons espied their long-stretched flight streaking the sky. The splendidly caparisoned horses; thousands of huntsmen in blue and scarlet liveries; the hunters, men and women. eyes gleaming, cheeks ruddy with health and fresh air; the hawks, the hounds, the eagles, the abundance of the game-behind them, in the distance, in endless zigzag, the battlements, towers, bastions of the Great Wall; in front of them, chase, excitement, keenness, speed.

Or he would picture the Emperor holding the New Year Festival in his great palace at Khan Baligh—the White Festival, for all the presents were white and the dresses were white and the shoes were fashioned of white buckskin laced with silver, white being the colour of good luck among the Mongols. And he would see again in the vast sunlit square the grand parade of the camels and the five thousand imperial elephants, superb in housings brilliantly patterned with all manner of birds and beasts

and broidered arabesques, bearing on their backs caskets filled with vessels of silver and vessels of gold to be used at the subsequent banquet.

But what he recalled most vividly was the Golden Festival, the festival commemorating nothing so ordinary as the advent of a new year, but the event of events—the birth of the great, the mighty, the semi-sacred, divine Khan himself, his birthday festival.

It was celebrated at the end of September, when beautiful coolness had begun to glide into the air, beautiful golden tints into the green of summer. His nobles and vassal kings, his sons, his nephews, his wives and their wives, his courtiers, his astrologers, his leeches, his falconers, assembled in the hall, its carpets of richly coloured silks fringed with gold; its ceilings of dragons and phænixes carved as it were out of solid gold; its panels emblazoned with pictures of gods and famous kings, set like luminous gems in walls of gold. And the Great Khan and his nobles were dazzling in robes of woven gold and girdles of gold studded with pearls and precious stones. And all the jugs full of spiced wine and kumiss were of gold, and the goblets out of which those thousands of resplendent mortals drank were pure gold also.

Raised above all the others sat the mighty Emperor, his principal wife at his side, his cheeks ruddy with good living and fresh air, his black eyes sparkling with fat joy at the abundance of the good things of this world piled around him, beyond the limits of one man's powers of possession. Below him sat his sons, nephews, and imperial kinsmen and more wives, the Khan's and theirs. Next to these and lower still, in the proper order of their rank, favour, and importance, the nobles and all the other

guests. The cupbearer and personal attendants on the Emperor wore silken kerchiefs bound over their mouths and nostrils, that the pollution of mortal breath should not contaminate the dishes and the liquor whereof His Majesty deigned to partake. Whenever he was going to drink, the kettledrum, the trumpets, the flutes, and the cymbals all burst out into music, and when he took the cup, all the assembly dropped on their knees, making the deepest obeisance to the Emperor, who then proceeded to drink. And every time he did so the same ceremony was gone through; for drinking is a great thing, and when performed by the greatest mortal on earth cannot be passed by unnoticed.

The food was sumptuous, wine plentiful, etiquette did not require sobriety and dullness. Many of these goldenrobed grandees, who had processed in so majestically, stumbled about on leaving in happiest inebriation. If they collapsed on the sacred threshold, which on entering it was strictly forbidden to touch at all, they were only good-humouredly pushed aside. They were happy, all these revellers. Not one out of that feasting, laughing, bejewelled crowd would have willingly exchanged his lot for all the dreams of Taoist, Buddhist, or Christian saints.

Moralists who praise the merits of the simple life and gravely warn against the demerits of luxury and the dire evils of temptation will eternally be confronted by the fact that the good things of this world are good. From time to time, under strong religious emotion, whipped up by an ardent preacher like Savonarola, multitudes will fling their perfumes and cosmetiques, their jewels and their profane books, into a great fire; or else an oppressed middle-class, sour with envy at a breadth and fullness

and glow of life only vouchsafed a privileged aristocracy, will angrily turn its back on it all, slam the doors of the theatres, cut off the locks of its women, smash the stained glass of its cathedrals; or the proletariat, rising with the ferment instilled by Utopian theorists, will burn magnificent palaces, shiver gold-framed mirrors and exquisite porcelains to atoms, drag rich brocades in the mire, taboo soap and clean linen and every elegance of deportment and speech. But sooner or later the soap and the linen, the jewels, the cosmetiques, and the perfumes all creep back, the witching locks curl again, theatres, palaces, cathedrals are rebuilt, and mankind settles down once more to what should frankly be recognized as its main business-laughter, fun, and happiness. One of the greatest of modern thinkers has said the world would be better if it were happier, and the very greatest of the prophets of all times set so good an example of gay conviviality his enemies abused him as a wine-bibber and a glutton. Moralists who would effect something lasting should fix their whole attention on the quality of a man's mind. The amount or the absence of material wealth at his command, or indeed any outward circumstance of his life, does not touch this vital question at all. Let the spirit within be upright, true, and sincere, and luxury will not hurt nor misery embitter him. For to the spirit the wealth or the poverty, the joys or the sorrows of earthly life are but as the sunbeams and the clouds in a heaven immeasurably bigger than either, and needing both to reveal the full gamut of its beauty. To keep the mind in tune with the eternal harmonies is all that signifies, and this, for the unheroic average, can probably be achieved more readily in the joyousness of a feast than during the fastings of asceticism. Even Kublai Khan, weighted though he was by a greater amount of ill-gotten wealth than almost any mortal before or since, does not seem to have allowed what natural instincts he possessed towards generosity and benevolence to be wholly obliterated. The merry conviviality at his hospitable court no doubt helped to keep him in a good humour and prevented his becoming the morose bully into which multi-millionaires controlling the fate of entire nations easily degenerate. In his capital thirty thousand poor received every day a substantial loaf each, hot from the baking in the imperial ovens. Of the tithes he levied on wool and hemp and cotton and silk, what was left over, after the needs of the army had been supplied, was worked up into clothes for the poor-by forced labour, it is trueevery artizan having to give the State a whole day's work a week. But if this caused a grievance in one quarter, it prevented much suffering in another, and, after all, though a grievance is harder to bear than suffering, the suffering matters most.

Further, a certain number of particularly indigent families received a year's supply of grain from the imperial bounty. On his nobles several times a year he bestowed the gorgeous golden robes and girdles they wore on the high festivals. But in their case, on New Year's Day he expected handsome presents in return. Nine times nine white horses, nine times nine precious pearls, nine times nine pieces of gold, nine times nine rolls of silk, were the kind of gift considered acceptable. "Do ut des" is an useful principle. However, these nobles and cosmopolitan fortune-hunters, as governors of populous towns and provinces, passed what of burden there lay

in this lavish scale of giving on to the broad, inarticulate back of the taxpaying toilers, not yet endowed with that disconcerting sting, a vote.

Probably Kublai Khan was better than his agents. Having conquered China, he wanted to enjoy it peacefully, not to be harassed by the risings and rebellions to which excessive oppression will goad even a crushed people. Except for the burning of the Taoist books and for restrictions on the Mahomedan customs about the slaughtering of animals for food, he forestalled Frederick the Great's wise tolerance and suffered every one to find his own way to heaven. Much of this tolerance may have been policy. None of it was indifference. Most arose out of a sincere conviction that to have as many priests as possible, as many prayers, rituals. and litanies as could claim to have generally been efficacious, interceding in his favour at the court of the Almighty, must indubitably increase his luck. Wherefore he was as anxious to obtain one of Buddha's molars from Ceylon as oil from the lamp burning over Christ's sepulchre in Jerusalem. He asked for holy monks from Rome, and welcomed some from Tibet. Not very holy perhaps, but undoubtedly skilful in obtaining a real influence over him. Astrologers, soothsayers, sorcerers, to the number of five thousand, all fed at his expense, completed the army wherewith he no doubt expected to conquer Heaven as successfully as he had conquered Earth. His luck certainly was considerable. He belongs to those who are so successful that the multitude, to whom worldly success does appear as a mark of divine favour, could not help looking up to him with something akin to veneration.

On his great festivals, in temple, church, mosque, and synagogue, monks, priests, bonzes, mullahs, and rabbis, with much chanting, tinkling of bells, lighting of lamps, burning of incense, directed the devotions of their various flocks, and all prayed the God of their worship might save the Emperor, granting him long life, health, and happiness. In the golden Hall of the Palace, all the assembly being seated, the musicians' song having ceased, a great prelate arose and said in a loud voice:

"Bow and do reverence," when instantly all kow-towed, their foreheads touching the floor.

Then again the prelate said:

"God save and keep our Lord the Emperor, with length of years and with mirth and happiness."

And all answered: "So be it."

And once more the prelate said:

"May God increase and augment his empire and its prosperity more and more, and keep all his subjects in peace and goodwill, and may all things go well throughout his dominions."

And all responded: "So may it be."

And this adoration was repeated four times.

Kublai certainly attained a goodly length of years. He was eighty when, in 1294, death called him away from all the splendour he had enjoyed so much. In a long, mournful procession his body was taken from Khan Baligh to his native Mongolia, to the sacred mountain within whose wooded slopes all the Great Khans slowly dropped back into dimness and dust.

At Jenghis Khan's funeral procession and at that of Mongu, Kublai Khan's immediate predecessor, every unfortunate being whom the convoy met on the road was slain, so as to wait upon the great departed in the next world. In this way twenty thousand ghosts were sent shivering after the imperial spectre, who out of his coffin still clutched his subjects with so merciless a grip. It is to be hoped that the lamas had obtained enough influence to prevent Kublai's name being branded into his people's memory with such blood-red capitals, and that it was not the shriek of victims, only the wail of real sorrow, that wept around his hearse as it moved north towards the shadow of the grave, to the mournful rhythm of the same dirge wherewith his mighty ancestor had been borne away out of the light, the colour, and the movement of his wonderful life on the face of this earth:

Once thou didst swoop like a falcon:

A rumbling wagon now trundles thee off,

O my King!

Hast thou in truth then forsaken

Thy wives and thy sons and thy people's assembly?

O my King!

Towering in pride like an eagle, Once thou didst lead us,

O my King!

But now thou hast stumbled and fallen Like an unbroken colt,

O my King!

Kublai was the last of the great Eastern Khans. His successors seem in every way to have been built on a less dazzling scale. At the court, in the army, in the administration, there was a slow but unmistakable shrinkage of things Mongolian, like the drying up of a great flood—a slow but stedfast reassertion of China and things Chinese, like the emergence of verdant meadows out of the mud and the mire left by a deluge. City-life brought with it the need for a gentler civilization than mere camping, raiding, and cattle-breeding had previously encouraged. The Confucian Book on Filial Piety was translated into Mongolian. The State examination in the Chinese Classics was re-established. Even the sacrifices in the Temple of Heaven were resumed. Chinamen were admitted to the lower posts in the civil service.

Yet there was a rift in the lute. Hearty co-operation between ruler and ruled, without which no government is really strong, remained unattainable. There was too much to learn on one side, too much to forgive on the other. When the Mongols undertook to keep a highly civilized people, united in the remembrance of a glorious past and in the poignancy of their present humiliation, in perpetual political tutelage, they set themselves a task of such stupendous difficulty only a succession of geniuses not merely on the throne, but in every important post, could possibly have carried it through. Nature is not prolific in geniuses; least of all at a voluptuous court. Nor does the severe discipline needed to prevent armies as large and as heterogeneous as those of the Great Khan from splitting up into mere factiousness, prove suitable soil for nurturing either genius or conspicuous administrative talent. Lucky if after a few decades it does not stupefy even average ability. And the Tibetan lamas whom the Khans called in to help them police the conquered people proved worse than useless. It only meant the giving a free hand to a horde of hungry and ignorant fanatics. Their power, and the insolence power begets in the unworthy, were deeply resented by the Chinese, and became one of the causes of the wreck of the Mongol tyranny.

Yet the determining cause of its downfall came from within, from the fact that the Mongol race was unable to produce the great number of able, adequately trained men needed to successfully govern twenty millions of intelligent human beings. To bite off huge slices of the world's surface is comparatively easy, to chew and digest them is altogether a different problem—one that cannot be solved by mere force of will, however strenuous and well organized. For it depends on such hidden and uncontrollable factors as the genius and vitality of a race, and as to whether its achievement moves with or stands in opposition to the world-spirit's general line of advance. The Tartar genius ran wholly to military conquest. For the laborious duties of administration, for the careful husbanding and efficient fostering of the conquered territories' resources, they displayed no talent whatsoever. The extravagance at the court was prodigious. Nor had the nobles when made governors of towns and provinces any idea of denying the moment its fullest measure of enjoyment and luxury. No thought for the morrow ever troubled their wine-sodden brains. Like children eating all their sweets in a few greedy gulps, never thinking of the sickness to follow. Still less did the cosmopolitan rabble Kublai Khan gathered at his court contain the makings of that honest, conscientious, hard-working, intelligent bureaucracy without which a big empire soon ceases to be a working proposition.

Wherefore the Great Khan's power over China remained merely that of the sword; which meant that he had to keep his army in good humour. But what with waste, dishonesty, and incompetence, the laying capacities of the golden-egged goose were rapidly giving out. The fleet had been squandered on useless expeditions. Pirates began to swarm across the routes of the merchant ships which paid the custom-dues, the most important asset of the public revenue. Ignorance and superstition being encouraged, poverty came, and dirt, and disease and death. Floods came and famine—thousands were wiped out. Weeds flourished where there had been well tilled fields. There is no revenue to be squeezed out of weeds. Nor out of empty harbours.

Rebellions flamed up here and there, for besides dearth, disease, and oppression there were strange portents—earthquakes, comets, eclipses of the sun, events which in those days excited people's minds as much as newspaper lies do now; genuine enlightenment, that is, the power to see facts and occurrences in their proper bearings and perspective, never being anything but the privilege of the few.

But popular excitement, whatever its origin, is a dangerous power for rulers to leave at large. The Chinese were forbidden to keep any weapons, which prohibition gave the Mongol Empire, already cracking in all its joints, a few years' reprieve before the final collapse.

The Emperor Toghon Timur used these years badly, flung them away in a fatuous mixture of bigotry and vice. They were not years merely which he wasted—the supply of years is endless—but his own span of earthly life, the days of which, with their opportunities for doing well

or ill, are very strictly limited. He dabbled in expensive schemes. The Hoang-ho was to be given a new bed. Thousands of coolies were set to work on this wholly unnecessary and highly unpopular undertaking.

Discontent growled more and more audibly

But Toghon Timur was too busy to hear, too busy dreaming on sumptuous pleasure barges, too busy playing in his harem, too busy constructing a wonderful mechanical timepiece, with figures of saints and angels processionally marking the hours.

Out on the high roads converging on the capital, the hours were marked not by the passage of gilt and bejewelled devas, but by the swift thud of horses' hoofs, the hurried fall of the feet of imperial messengers, the bells on their girdles jingling, their hot breath panting with the urgency of their speed. They were running, running, galloping, galloping, a hundred, two hundred, two hundred and fifty miles a day in rapid relays, bearing from every quarter of the realm black news to Khan Baligh—Liang Hu conquered by rebels, Kiang Si subjugated, Fu Kien in revolt, Kuang-tung seized, Korea restless, Honan threatening; from every governor and general frenzied appeals for reinforcements, help, instructions. But there was no help in Toghon Timur.

There might be in the gods; their lamas had lacked nothing; fortunes had been sunk in their endowments. Now surely they could make some magic to defeat the Great Khan's enemies.

So litanies waxed loud and long, prayers, processions, intercessions, chantings doubled and trebled to weary the deafest of Boddhisattvas; altars piled with offerings, lights kept flaming, incense smoking more and more

densely round the passive gaze of the golden Buddha who would neither speak nor stir—and vows and prostrations, maledictions, benedictions, all the officious piety of consciences which dare not own unto themselves how profoundly they are scared.

And soothsayers were plied with questions. And they gave hopes, made promises which brightened a few weeks with confidence, allowed the mind to glide pleasantly over all those black news which the panting runners brought. Till one night Fate, drawing very near, shook up Toghon Timur with a grimly warning dream.

He saw a huge boar with tusks of iron tear into Khan Baligh, lunge about wildly, wounding the people, who fled hither and thither, finding no refuge anywhere. In the sky above, the sun and a blood-red moon rushed together and perished.

Terror-struck, Toghon Timur asked the diviner what this dream portended.

"The loss of an empire," was the answer.

No comfort in that. And the rebels were drawing very near. They were led by a Chinaman, Chu Yüanchang. Formerly he had served Buddha as a monk.

Was Buddha favouring him?

What use then in resisting, if gods could show as much ingratitude as men?

In the darkness of the night, the star of his good luck forever set, Toghon Timur left Kublai Khan's resplendent palace: left his wonderful timepiece with its figures of saints and angels processionally marking the hour of a departure that was like flight; left women and jewellery and furniture and fittings, cups of gold and platters of silver, vases of jade, carpets of silk; left Khan Baligh, with

its costly temples and crenellated towers; left the plain around it, wet with the dew of night; left China, passed out beyond the Great Wall, put the safety of immense distances between himself and his rival. And the following year the distances grew boundless as Eternity. At Karo-korum, the old Mongol capital, Toghon Timur, his faith in life completely shattered, lay down and turned his feeble face away from it all for always.

And in China, even before his panic-stricken flight, the main Mongol resistance had come to an end. Here and there from out-of-the-way garrisons it still flared up, slightly delaying the victorious advance of the Chinese. But it is not inspiring to fight for a king who treks away in the dead of night. The life had gone out of the fighting. Soon the whole of it was triumphantly flung out of Chinese territory into the plains beyond the Great Wall. The might of the Great Khan's army, which had entered China as a roaring lion, went out meekly as a lamb. The discipline that had made it so irresistible had lost its virtue. Stern military discipline, being highly artificial, is given to these sudden failures. It goes wholly against a man's natural tendencies, means the complete surrender of his body and his soul, and all that these imply of hopes, desires, affections, idiosyncrasies, opinions, sympathies, talents, to an outside power that does not pretend to use human bodies and souls for anything but its own ambitious aims, frequently diametrically opposed to the people's welfare.

Military discipline is in fact a strong and highly unpalatable medicine. To get men to gulp it down in large and constant doses, a very compelling motive must be at work behind it—either the blind devotion inspired by a magnetic personality like Jenghis Khan or Napoleon, backed by a prospect of abundant loot, or some supreme need for rigidly united action to save national existence like that which animated the Greeks in their first wars against Persia, or else a deep-rooted national will to power such as makes thousands of Englishmen voluntarily submit to all the hardships and exigencies of the naval service.

The Mongols of the late fourteenth century were not swayed by any of these impulses. Toghon Timur, with his lamas, his concubines, and his mechanical toys, lacked the first rudiments of an arresting personality; their home country was not in any danger, and it had always been lust of loot rather than the craving for dominion which had started them on their career of conquest. The China sucked dry by almost a century of Tartar exploitation, its trade ruined by pirates, its fields laid waste by floods, earthquakes, and rebellions, its people exasperated by the treble extortions of priests, officials, and soldiers, was not by any means as much worth fighting for as the thriving, happy, well governed country ruled by the Sungs eighty years before. After all, there was something in the careless life of their old cattle-breeding, camping days, diversified by occasional raids into what of contiguous Chinese territory had had time to recover some of its ancient wealth.

So the Tartar turned the heads of his horses northward again, leaving behind him fields covered with brambles, villages robbed and terrorized by bandits, towns half ruined by long sieges, warehouses empty, workshops idle, a gaunt remnant of their former swarms of busy humans cowering behind ruins, scraping among garbage for bits

of food; leaving behind him, too, the brand of subjection burnt deep into the people's character, because he had driven its civic virtues to fester underground in the unhealthy atmosphere of secret societies, plottings, conspiracies; because he had taught it to look upon the government as a power outside itself, always alien and generally hostile; because he had made a happy, kindly, fearless race timid, morose, suspicious. What a comment on the fulfilment of the Tartar's historic mission to find an outlet for his restlessness on the shores of ice-free seas! In the accomplishment of this "mission," Tartar dominion had spread like a gigantic parasite, driving its thousand tentacles into the living body of China.

Now the time of its full-blown triumph was over, and it behoved the makers of liberated China to shape all the national energies that lay limp and tangled on the ground into a self-reliant, vigorous, and healthy State. No easy matter.

The simpler task of driving the invader out of the country had taken sixteen years (1352-68). In the deceptive foreshortening of history sixteen years seems little. They are endless to those who live through all the three hundred and sixty-five days of every one of these sixteen years, each day bringing alternately reports of victory, rumours of defeat, signs of progress, evidence of set-backs, hope, discouragement, illusions and disillusions, and the sorrowful toll of killed and wounded—all the ebb and flow and light and shade of a protracted struggle, the ultimate issue still dark and hidden on the knees of the gods. It was the good fortune of the Chinese that in those years of utmost need they were granted

a born leader, who saved them from scattering their energies amongst a number of local patriots. These arose wherever the war of liberation was earnestly begun. Some of them, like Kuo Tzu Hsing, loomed so large on the horizon, followers came to him and expectations.

But gradually the importance of the many merged into the glory of the one, Shu Yüan-chang. Had not his name come to mean hope and strength, confidence and victory, all the relief from fear, hatred, anger, anxiety, wherewith the cruelties and uncertainties of war darken the groping mind of man? At one period of his career he was called "Duke," but the Chinese of those days, more discerning than their republican descendants, knew that "Emperor" was the only title suitable to so able, so fearless, so successful a leader. Into his wise, kind, patient hands Heaven had most assuredly, most plainly discernible to all, entrusted the solemn mandate which had lain asleep so long.

In 1368 he was proclaimed Emperor. Under the name of Hung Wu he became the founder of the new Chinese dynasty, rightly called "Ming," that is, the Bright, the Luminous.

It had taken him sixteen years of planning, marching, fighting, conciliating, destroying, creating, to reach the Dragon Throne, and before that, years of inward preparation, years of seeking the place in which this wonderful gift, a human life, could be used to its fullest capacity of endeavour and achievement.

He was born in a village, among poor peasant folk. His father worked on the soil, worked hard year in, year out, but at the end-and the end came early, he was so tired—there was not enough to pay for his coffin

The mother died, too, and the older relatives. The workers died and the work remained, fixed, imperative, calling new men out of their beds each morning with the inexorable regularity of the rising of the sun. But Shu Yüanchang did not want to work. He wanted to find out about the sense of what seemed so senseless, wanted to learn something about that divine Power which he felt must be the very soul of Love, though so much on earth seemed so pitilessly cruel.

He entered a Buddhist monastery.

He found a great deal there of what he needed most at the time: food, shelter, and the leisure wherein to clarify what was dimly fermenting in his blood and half choking him with the turmoil of undefined ambitions.

Sometimes, as he wondered up at the gigantic Boddhisattva of the central shrine, the golden outline of the statue seemed to break through the walls, flow out into the sky beyond, and merge into the glory of all the sunsets of the world. For there was a world beyond the precincts of the holy walls, beyond the passive wealth of the monastery and the overworked misery of the village—a world vast, live, unexplored, where the days were spent otherwise than in cleaning and filling incensejars, in shaking out prayer-mats, in dusting voiceless images and silent altars. How were they spent?

It were well to know before one died.

Old monks warned him against the evil of the world's ways, the sinfulness of its temptations.

An ill-governed world it certainly seemed to be—the alien lording it everywhere and the native flattened out into that featureless, evil-smelling crowd which in ever greater numbers whined at the monastery gate for daily dole of charity, the leprosy of their abject destitution eating more and more deeply into their bones, bursting through skin and grimy rags to pour the fetid stench of ulcers into the staring light of day.

O to be able to heal them, feed them, lift them out of the dust where they bruised their unwashed foreheads, grovelling before their oppressors with the cringing humility of a hunger that had gnawed at them so long it had destroyed the very motion of their blood; to turn them again into that sturdy, valiant peasantry their forefathers had been and without which no nation can subsist for long—that surely were a work wherewith to fill to overflowing all the splendid days of life. And his life, after unbroken years of ingathering of strength, was surely big enough, healthy enough to attempt this urgent task.

Where did it lead to, the daily repetition of "Om mani padme um"? Merely back again to "Om mani padme um," mumbled with a monotony that to his new impatience was becoming like the gibbering of apes.

What could "Om mani padme um," what could the saying of a thousand prayers, the burning of a million incense-sticks, do for these creatures crushed by ignorance, want, oppression into something so akin to the refuse one flung away as far as possible from the precincts of human habitation, one felt a horrible desire to seize those responsible for all this wretchedness and to hurl them headlong from the high seats which they had usurped and used so ill.

Then suddenly one day in the year of the Black Dragon a cry vibrated through the country, trembled, rose above the whining of the poor, gathered into itself that whining and the whining of a multitude of other hungers, the pentup whispers of eighty years of hopes and dreams and schemes; waxed loud and bold, grew into a clamour, broke into a command for justice, freedom, restitution. Ho Chow, the capital of his native province, was wrested from the Mongols, the first city to become Chinese again.

Then Shu Yüan-chang knew which was the place where he could use that wonderful gift of a man's life to its fullest capacity of endeavour and achievement.

And he rose from the prayer-mat, left the prayer-wheels and the incense-bowls, left the peace and the safety of the monastic walls shimmering with the golden twilight of an Indian god, dreamy with the music of small bells stirred by the passing of the breeze—the breeze which was a wind outside, a hurricane, the mighty tempest of a war of liberation. Let born shavelings pray for the Celestial Empire, his part was to work and fight for it.

He joined the rebels: patriots are rebels, dacoits, as long as their victory is not assured. The Chinese rebels succeeded in obtaining this supreme sanction for their rising. Partly because right and justice were on their side, though that by itself is unfortunately by no means sufficient to ensure success; mainly because in Shu Yüanchang they found a great leader and had the sense to pay homage to him as such. He certainly should be classed among those of whom humanity can be justly proud. Not only did he destroy the iniquity of Mongol domination, but out of all the wrecks wherewith the long tyranny and its protracted death-throes had strewn the face of the country he reconstructed that community of valiant peasants, skilful [craftsmen, honest merchants, able scholars, gifted artists, into which the Sons of Han, and

indeed most nations, instinctively develop when not thwarted by too unscrupulous or too incompetent a government.

Yet so powerful is the thirst for the spectacular—a thirst which in the furnace atmosphere of an ignorant and scurrilous Press is rapidly swelling into a vice which in the insidiousness of the demoralization it produces far exceeds the old vices of drunkenness and opium-smoking -that whereas such large-scale malefactors as Jenghis Khan and Napoleon are celebrated throughout the world, Shu Yüan-chang, the founder of the Ming dynasty, has practically never been heard of outside his own country. That his quiet, patient, beautiful work of healing and building should exercise so feeble a hold on public attention, whereas battles and bloodshed, with their hideous trail of anguish and misery, are written and sung about and remembered as if they really made for the glory of men, speaks badly for the collective judgment of mankind. Until so fundamental an error in the bestowal of renown becomes unthinkable, the prospect for any permanent improvement in the lot of the masses remains exceedingly dark.

But, of course, it was not renown that Shu Yüan-chang sought, only the happiness of his people—his people, out of whose poverty and patience had grown his own strength of purpose to achieve their deliverance. And he achieved it abundantly. Another splendid resurgence of the joyous creative faculties of national life was the crowning glory and justification of his work.

They had cowered so long in the shadow of Tartar oppression. Now, like a flock of birds caged up for years and suddenly set free, they streaked the sky with the

jubilation of their song. Some, indeed, had lost the full power of their wings. Over the eyes of others imprisonment had drawn the twilight film of its weariness, the poison of its dread of initiative. This unwonted vastness of a free horizon made them dizzy, and they looked back too much to the past for reassurance and encouragement. But the truly great are able fearlessly to face the future also. Still, although much of the intellectual and artistic production of the Ming period is reminiscent and inclined to elaborate, even to over-elaborate, the models set by more vital periods, it is surely better beautifully to repeat the beautiful old things, the true things, than to say false and unlovely ones for no other reason but that they have never been said before. And an immense amount of beauty was added to all the loveliness already accumulated in that country loved of Heaven, the Celestial Empire. We who stand so near those fertile days of the Mings that we can still tread on the carpets they wove, drink out of the cups which they fashioned, touch the silks they embroidered, admire the pictures they painted, handle the jades and ivories they carved so exquisitely they seem like the tracery of hoarfrost which the first touch of the sun will melt away; we who above all can worship in the temples they erected, and dream in those great tombs where Emperors made space vast and sumptuous around Death, because they knew it was a triumph and a coming home-we surely should frame in the remembrance of our lasting gratitude the man who rendered all this possible, Shu Yüan-chang, the founder of the last great Chinese dynasty.

CHAPTER VI

When the Mongols withdrew from China, there was one thing they left behind them, a thing so beautiful, for having left that, we can forgive them a great deal, namely, the place they had selected as their capital, built, enlarged, embellished, practically created out of all the wealth which gathered round the Great Khan's court—Khan Baligh, as they called it, Peking as we call it now.

They could not carry it away with them. They had not time to destroy it. That attempt was reserved for the twentieth century, that amazing century which fancied it began as the most enlightened era ever dropped out of the golden sands of time, yet beginning simultaneously in South Africa and China, has in less than two decades already piled up death and ruin and the desecration of man's finest virtues hell-deep and heaven-high. The thirteenth century was similarly afflicted with wars and violences and enormous armaments. But in its lucid intervals it did rise to the fashioning of some very fine buildings. Notably it achieved the laying down of the general lines on which Peking is planned to this day. There was indeed a town on or very near the particular spot chosen by the Mongols, long before their coming, a town with walls and towers and the palace of a kinga minor king, not memorable for anything in particular. And away back in the haze of the centuries preceding the Christian era there existed a Kingdom of Yen, whereof Peking was the capital. "Yen" signifies swallow, so on the very threshold of its history there is a beating of bright summer wings and the glamour of royal palaces round this city, whereof it used to be truly held that it was built in harmony with all the beneficent influences radiating from heaven and emanating from earth.

The reasons for a town growing up on that site, at a time when the building of towns was a grave matter about which much careful planning, great consulting of oracles took place, must have been the abundance of the water-supply, and its suitability as a mart where the harvests of that rich plain could be conveniently bartered for the furs and live stock brought in by northern nomads. It was built and it prospered, and wars came and destroyed it and peace returned and rebuilt it, till further warfare delivered it over into the hands of Jenghis Khan. Masterful hands, which lay heavy on the town, but whatever of destruction and spoliation was wrought then, was compensated by his descendant, Kublai Khan, when he set up his capital close to the site of the Khitan town. With a short break under the first Mings, who resided in Nan King, it has remained the capital of China ever since. And almost the whole history of China, from the mediæval days of the Yuan dynasty to the brandnew days void of many things, including a dynasty, is written there-the might of the Mongols, the faith and refinement of the Mings, the magnificence of the Manchus and their madness, the aggressive vulgarity of machinedriven civilizations, the incendiarisms of revolutionaries, inspiration and folly, success and failure, exuberance and weariness, strength and weakness, they can all be traced in the walls and the towers, the palaces and the temples, the wide military avenues, the dusty lanes, the banks and the ruins, the crowds and the solitudes of what was once the capital of the wealthiest empire of the world. A walk round the circumference of its mighty walls is like the unrolling of seven centuries of vividly illuminated chronicles, some important pages unfortunately cruelly mutilated, others dropped out altogether.

The buildings of the Kung Yuan, the old Examination Hall, utterly vanished, as though they never had existed and focused the intellectual ambitions of countless generations of hardworking scholars. A blank space, where crows foregather and lame dogs, nothing but that fragile thing remembrance to mark the grave of a whole system of human thought. Such wonderfully noble and harmonious thought too. Some day it will revive, not as a system, because the social conditions which moulded it into one can never quite return, but as an indispensable part of those ideals which lift mankind out of the dust and suffuse human darkness with the glow of a mighty inspiration. For a great deal of ancient Chinese thought belongs to those fundamental, eternally true principles which the world often neglects and tries to forget, but to which it inevitably returns, when bleeding and bruised beyond endurance from its headstrong wanderings in that wilderness, where wisdom is scorned and the clamour of unscrupulous charlatans is applauded as the only guide rational beings should attempt to follow.

Near the unhonoured grave of old Chinese book-lore stands the Observatory, once a place of importance and liberal endowments by emperors, who in eclipses, comets, and the movements of the planets saw the handwriting of fate. The endowments seem to have shrunk to vanishing point. There is a look of poverty about the low buildings and small, oblong courtyard, but they are exquisitely clean, and still a place for the quiet and beautiful work of watching those mighty worlds circling above and around our little world in the clear gold of their inviolable remoteness.

Since the days when the mother of the great Yü saw in a meteor the divine power to which she owed that most perfect of gifts, a first-born son, the days when men first began to look up beyond the narrow circle of bodily needs and in the joy of their liberation raised altars to the spirit of the stars, mankind has altered much. The stars have remained almost the same. The angle at which they shine down on earth may have shifted a little -that is all. Perhaps, if we knew everything, that is the only real change time ever does bring, though to our ignorance the changes produced seem enormous. In the wealth of our scientific knowledge we look down as from the height of a proud throne on the humble gropings after knowledge, when man first attempted to understand the world wherein he found himself. We have given up the vanity of reading our personal fate in the stars and have accumulated instead a number of precise facts about their outward existence; we have calculated the speed and orbit of their circling, tabulated the chemistry of their constituent elements, measured their powers of attraction, but the inner mystery of their being is as far beyond our reach as ever. There, too, it is merely a slight shifting of the angle of vision.

At the time the Peking Observatory was built, antiquity, with its wondering credulity, was already a long long way back, and simple adoration of the spirit of the stars had been supplemented and largely superseded by a careful observation of their movements. This task was entrusted to men who were really astronomers, though astrology was an important branch of their functions. Kublai Khan, with his predilection for foreigners, put Saracens in charge of the Observatory; the Manchus handed it over to Jesuits. On a square platform elevated above the height of the city wall, the zodiacs, astrolobes, sextants made under their direction still stand out clear against the sky-line. They are beautifully cast in bronze; fixed on white marble pedestals embellished with flowing designs of the hills, waves, and clouds so much favoured by Chinese artists. European scientific accuracy blends well with the Chinese talent for decoration. In their fearless co-operation lay the promise of real progress. It was a great calamity that lust of dominion and commercial greed thrust themselves violently to the front, sowing suspicion, fear, and hatred where there had been confidence and trust. Three of these mathematical instruments were appropriated by the Germans during the Boxer troubles, when everybody took what they fancied. The empty stands look quite forlorn, but it is something to know the bronzes are well taken care of in the land of their exile, and some day, when Peking is better able than at present to guard and cherish her old art treasures, they may come back to her.

That day is not yet.

Neglect, neglect is written large over all the beauty and the grandeur bequeathed by a more vital past. And as if neglect did not bring about decay sufficiently quickly, frightful vandalisms have been and are being perpetrated on the helpless old monuments. At one corner of the walls more than half the masonry has been torn down for some useless circular railway, the earnings of which will pay dividends to foreign concession-hunters. At another the glittering tiles of what was once a brightly painted turret have been replaced by that unspeakable abomination, corrugated iron imported from abroad.

Poverty, ignorance, neglect—almost throughout the fourteen miles of the circumference of the old city-walls those three sad words throw their dark shadows on disjointed pavements, cracking masonry, broken stones, crumbling parapets, subsiding towers; scrub, weeds, even tall cypresses shooting up among the rubble, between widening fissures, to hasten the approaching end.

Yet were they properly kept up, Peking could give its citizens the finest walk of any capital in the world. For the air and the sun are beautiful on those broad walls, raised high above the dust of country roads, above the closeness of city streets. The views are a perpetual delight: the ever-changing magic of the lines and colours of the western hills, the well-tilled plain, the frozen canal with its crowds of cheery sledgers; on the roads, strings of camels bringing merchandise into Peking or bearing it away with the long, patient step of those whose burden is heavy and whose trail goes far, about their shaggy silhouette a sense of space immeasurably filled with distance, dust, and solitude; scattered round here and there, pink-walled temples, a bunch of cypresses among their marble courtyards, villages on hummocks

of crumbling soil, and away beyond the smoke and ugliness of the railway station, a brilliancy in an oasis of evergreen trees-the Temple of Heaven, lonely watch-tower true to its trust in a turbid welter of havoc, change, and desecration. Still further, the flash of green tiles in what was once an imperial hunting park. The slender poles of wireless telegraphy stand there now, gathering the world's gossip out of the blue. One wonders whether the mystic influences which the untutored instinct of the ancient Chinese thought of attracting out of their skies by fragrance of burnt-offerings, by music of lutes and bells and drums, were not on the whole more conducive to spiritual welfare than the latest news from battlefields, parliaments, or Stock Exchange. Still those slender poles do point upwards, and some day they may vibrate with nothing but messages of peace and goodwill from nation to nation, from race to race.

That day also is not yet.

Mankind, under the double weight of its inevitable needs and the debts and taxes piled mountain-high by reckless governments, is still far too engrossed by the struggle for obtaining a sufficiency of daily bread to be able to spare the time, the energy needed, before peace and goodwill, righteousness and benevolence can be re-established as a living creed, controlling instead of merely decorating thoughts, desires, and actions. For the vast majority, life is a round of toil, with occasional breaks of merrymaking or descents of calamity, a greyness with a few splashes of white or black, spent under grey roofs, in grey lanes, between grey walls. Certainly the vast majority live thus in Peking—not destitute, but exceedingly poor. Luckily, however much their politi-

cians may mismanage the affairs of state, the sun shines faithfully into the little courtyards, filters gaily down the narrow lanes, turning much greyness into shining gold.

The poor of London and New York have to take the greyness of their lives almost darkened into black by fogs and clouds and bitter winds blowing down into lungs and windows the soot and smoke of gigantic factories. And they have no purple haze of western hills, no glittering Temple of Heaven, no cypress groves round sacred shrines visible to all, proclaiming unto all that God's earth is beautiful. No wonder they have ceased to think so; have grown unable to look for happiness in anything higher than an increase of wages and a decrease in the hours of daily grind. But neither wealth nor leisure in themselves provide a short-cut to that inner harmony which is the only foundation for enduring happiness-a harmony the mind alone can achieve by keeping itself attuned to those divine influences vibrating between the splendour of the universe and the understanding heart of man. Our steam-and-iron civilization has erred gravely in scorning these as irrelevant to its main obsession, the piling up of profits and the earning of wages; in believing enough is done for healthy human development when well-flushed drains and clattering trams run through every big thoroughfare, when a specified amount of cubic space is provided for every toiler, pauper, or prisoner, to allow his lungs a sufficiency of oxygen. But man lives not by oxygen alone. He must have beauty and holiness around him every hour of his life. Locking art up in the sterile atmosphere of academies, never encouraging it to touch factories, offices, power-stations, workmen's dwellings with the magic wand of loveliness, is suicidal folly.

The unnatural divorce between the useful and the beautiful has seriously injured both—in some countries killing art outright. In the gloom of unspeakably dreary streets, in the shadow of monstrous gasometers, belching chimneys, foul heaps of slack and scrap-iron, the irrepressible craving for brightness and beauty which through all this discouragement still surges up in the young, however completely it may have been stifled in the old, has to find what food it can in the glare of shop-windows and the blaze of picture-palaces. Of large modern capitals, Berlin seems to be the only one which with fine architectural courage has solved the problem of making warehouses and blocks of apartments things interesting to the eye and stimulating to the imagination.

In most of the new buildings of the Legation Quarter in Peking. Europe's blank utilitarianism has infected even the Far East. But the sins of Western architects are white as snow compared to those of the modern Chinese. From confused reminiscences of Jesuit sacerdotal style, of International Exhibition pavilions, and second-hand scenery of provincial touring companies, a neo-Chinese style has been evolved, amazing in its pretentious ugli-It revels in arches innocent of all swing or spring, in ornaments of no decorative value whatsoever, in proportions which clash with each other and jar with their surroundings, colours which reek of leaden daub and cheapness-shoddy material, shoddy workmanship, shoddy conception. The splendid old shop-fronts of deeply carved and richly gilt woodwork are being replaced by common glass and plain deal boards, so suggestive of mean streets and stale goods. Bazaars and theatres of unmitigated ugliness disfigure some of the main streets.

Right into the precincts of the Purple—once the Forbidden—City this mongrel style of building has penetrated. Yet the ancient Chinese architecture was beautiful, and could, with a little study and care, be adapted to all modern requirements. Not all of it is lost. Some of its finest specimens remain, though every year their number grows less.

Looking down from the city walls, the magnificent curve of the roof of the Temple of K'ung-fu-tsze can still be admired, also the graceful pailow and the yellow tiles of the Pi Kung gleaming like amber above the transparent mirror and snowy marble bed of its circlet of water. On either side of it, white, upright above the dust of dire neglect, the tablets of the Classics, the whole of one of the great bibles of the world, deeply carved in marble.

Near by, though representing a wholly different order of ideas, the spacious courts and magnificently proportioned halls and bronzes of the Lama Monastery, drowsy in the quiet of a winter afternoon and the imminent collapse of the pretty rooflets and richly carved balconies of the tower-like structure which shelters the giant Boddhisattva.

And yet another order of ideas is embodied in the Drum Tower and the Bell Tower, once the centre of Khan Baligh, and still so strongly reminiscent of mediæval alarms and excursions. Much hard stone went into their making. They were built for hard men in the bitter days of conquest. They were watch-towers whence to keep an eye on the citizens given to subterraneous discontent, to mark for them the hours of their rising and their lying down. Now they are given over to crows, forlorn caretakers, and the occasional gaze of hurried tourists. Time, which

they once marked so faithfully with elaborate clepsydras, striking of cymbals and the beating of the sonorous drum, has moved such a long long way beyond them. Kublai's sentinels challenge no one now. The busy multitudes that gathered here round the court of the Mongols, the Mings, and the Manchus are all vanished, their descendants wiped out from the light of day or drifted off elsewhere, leaving an empty wilderness of waste space round the forsaken towers.

There are many such waste spaces in Peking.

Boxer madness and its punishment, revolutions and their consequences, following almost a whole century of internal incompetence and of foreign aggression, have pitilessly undermined the foundations of the city's greatness and dried up the sources of its wealth. Hundreds of its houses must have collapsed or been destroyed; thousands of its inhabitants perished or trekked away. The town has shrivelled and shrunk to less than three-quarters of its original size within the hard shell of its walls, themselves giving way, infected by the creeping paralysis of what at present looks like irremediable decay.

The superb wide avenues laid out in happier times still remain, moving grandly from the Southern Gates, through triumphal arches to the Palace in the Purple City where a Son of Heaven sat splendid on the Dragon Throne. They were planned for huge processions of foreign embassies, escorted by imperial elephants, horses, banners, music, as they brought their costly presents—tribute of ivory, gold, gems, ebony, and spice—to lay them on the steps of that great and dazzling throne.

From Burmah they came, from Annam, Tongking, from Tibet and Turkestan. All these with equal humility

now send their offerings elsewhere. What tribute there is in Peking does not flow into it, it flows out—not grandly, processionally, along the stately old avenues lined by wealthy and self-governing crowds—but dimly, obscurely, it oozes away in nondescript boxes and bundles, is pitched into grimy foreign-made railway trucks, taken to foreign-owned harbours, loaded into foreign-owned ships, and sent away to foreign countries on the other side of the world.

From a tribute-receiving to a tribute-paying country it is a long fall, a staggering change.

The obvious moral seems to be that in order to avoid humiliation one should not inflict it on others; that they who crush or wish to crush others take the risk of getting crushed themselves. However, true morality—i.e. morality based on the actual facts of life as it is, not as in moments of weakness and weariness we wish it were-does not often corroborate the obvious. It notes that there are seasons of development and seasons of decay pulsating through the life of a nation or a race with a rhythm similar to the rise and fall of the tides of the ocean, of the outward and inward flow of the sap in a tree. A strong race on the expanding tide of its growth can no more be blamed for expanding than a budding plant for cleaving its passage to the light through all the intervening soil. All true morality will demand is, that such expansion should be directed into channels where it can develop most healthily to itself, most beneficially to others. The world undoubtedly is the better for a race of great mental and physical strength working itself into the broad glow of the sun by the impulse of its labour, intelligence and honesty; and if, in exchange for the tribute

it may be able to obtain from weaker nations, it gives them abundantly of its light, its strength, and its energy, the bargain is not an immoral one. It only becomes so where, instead of this equitable exchange, there is nothing but exaction on one side and payment on the other. Then indeed a wrong has been committed for which a penitential season of expiation in sackcloth and ashes is not merely a rightful retribution, but, what is of much greater consequence, often the only means for restoring in the penitent nation that clearness of judgment, that love of truth, that impartial criticism of itself as well as of others, which a long spell of power and prosperity tends to debilitate.

It was lamentable to what an extent these essential qualities for successfully conducting the affairs of a big empire had been weakened among the Manchus, when they imagined they could by a general massacre of foreigners in China rid themselves once for all of what had undoubtedly grown into a serious danger-foreign aggression. It can only be explained by their havingblinded on both eyes, deaf on both ears-surrendered body and soul to a wave of hallucination, a cloud of credulity such as sometimes sweeps over whole populations. Credulity is always the child of ignorance on the maternal side, the father being either excessive poverty and the fevered hopes it produces, or excessive luxuriousness with its overweening conceit, opposite extremes so often producing identical results. The Chinese variety of such dangerous gullibility, however fathered, was an immense power while it lasted-induced even the Empress-Dowager, shrewd though she naturally was, unhesitatingly to believe

the secret rites practised by the "Patriotic Harmony Fists" rendered their adepts bullet-proof. Bullet-proof, therefore invincible; invincible, therefore able to crush this threatening hydra of foreign covetousness. Thoroughgoing reform of Manchu administration, which with skill and patience would have provided complete protection, was of course tabooed as rank treason. Wholesale hatred of the foreigner, war to the knife with him, were the cry of the day, the faith of the hour. Had it not ceased to be true that killing is a double-edged sword which might slay Chinese as well as aliens? Were not the Boxers bullet-proof?

In unexpected ways, history repeats itself. Ten years after the Boxer frenzy, some other war-crazed nations, though not actually claiming to be bullet-proof, are yet smitten with a blindness of vision so identical with that of the "Patriotic Harmony Fists" as to make them believe slaughter can only seriously hurt the enemy, not themselves—that the laurels of the crushing victory they feel confident of winning will drip with hardly any blood but that of the detested foe, while the bountiful peace which would save their own sons from destruction is branded treason, and all thought of it must hide for safety in silence and subservience to the idol of the day—war of extermination of the enemy only.

And, thinking of all these things, one wonders why, after so many sages, saints, and prophets have pointed out the way to righteousness, justice, and benevolence—after their shining truths have been engraved on stone, written on parchment, multiplied in print, preached in thousands of pulpits, taught in millions of schools, worshipped as divine revelation for many centuries—still

from time to time entire nations let themselves stumble into an abyss of mental blindness which makes them surrender their thoughts, their feelings, and their actions to all the evil passions of rage, vindictiveness, injustice, selfishness, supposed to have been conquered long ago. The reason for such gigantic lapses seems to be that vicarious wisdom is not necessarily wisdom at all, that every great heritage must be earned before it can be really owned, and that unless each individual courageously and patiently rediscovers for himself the full meaning of the great principles proclaimed by sage and prophet, kindling them with the light of his own days, quickening them with the warm current of his own blood, they merely lie in his brain as a dry seed, all its potential wealth of growth, beauty, and nourishment locked up within a hard brown husk, incapable of doing any good whatsoever to the organism in which it has been placed.

Placed—not planted: the root of the mischief lies there.

Soulless, stereotyped teaching, even though it be teaching of the purest wisdom, is not much better than none; can even be worse, since it puffs out with the pomp and circumstance of borrowed knowledge men who might otherwise humbly acknowledge how much they still have to learn. It cramps initiative with fossilized conventions: drowns in the froth of rhetoric the grasp of vital principles which reveal themselves only in whispers or in the intuitions of a wordless solitude.

Men overburdened with phrases are defenceless when suddenly confronted by danger or temptation. Under the stress of strong emotions lashed up to fever-heat by frenzies of panic, wrath, or speculation, all the lofty principles which would have saved them from folly, had they acquired a living hold over their minds, drop off them like dead leaves in an autumn blast. Then untutored man in all the nakedness of his primitive savagery, credulity, and cowardice stands revealed, pitiable if he were not so dangerous, shouting and gesticulating in the face of the storm, which intoxicates him with its vastness, maddens him with his own clamour before dashing his overheated brains out against the silent rocks of doom.

That is the penalty those have to pay who, stuffed with the letter, starved of the spirit of ancient wisdom, relying on ancestral achievements rather than on their own, childishly assuming their own superiority as an axiom which the whole world will unquestioningly accept, cease to watch, and only continue praying in order to importune the God whom their every act denies with demands for swift and undeserved success.

And that was the penalty which befell the "Patriotic Harmony Fists" and all those who had put their trust in them. Modern guns and rifles tore their way through the Boxers and proved them to be but mortal flesh and blood; tore their way through hundreds of innocent men too, as usual overwhelming the guiltless with even greater disaster than the guilty. Much was burnt by the Boxers, much wantonly destroyed or damaged by the foreign soldiers, an immense amount looted by everybody; the prestige of the Manchus mortally wounded; the faith of the people in their old gods and the old formulas severely shaken. And a whole period of doubt, dissatisfaction, trouble, ferment, restlessness, of indiscriminate pulling down and ill-considered jerry-building, let loose upon a

distracted nation, birds of prey within cooing to it lovingly as doves, prowling wolves outside posturing as faithful shepherds.

A sad period.

How long it will last and what will end it, a superb revival or a yet heavier fall, it is difficult to foretell, where there are so many forces pulling with equal vigour in either direction. But, whatever happens, life is immortal and fate, never idle, weaves to-morrow's triumph out of the failure of to-day—out of the folly of one generation the wisdom of the next.

And always the sun of Northern China hangs in a cloudless winter sky, an infinitude of glittering gold, clothing in the same radiant light ancient beauty and modern ugliness, temples and palaces, barracks and banks. But it likes shining on the temples and palaces best. For these meet and magnify and multiply it in the translucent mirror of glazed roofs, of majolica pailows, cinnabar pillars, in the dazzling white of marble stairs, courtyards, terraces.

They are very much alike, temples and palaces. There is no such deep cleavage between lay and religious architecture as prevails in Christian countries, because the idea that religion is a thing to be put on and off regularly once a week with one's Sunday clothes never occurred to the Chinese, when they began to build temples in adoration of the immensity of spiritual, and palaces in recognition of the importance of temporal power. The Son of Heaven who dwelt in the palace was also the pontiff who officiated at the altar. There was no parish church, but an ancestral temple in every large, an ancestral shrine in every humbler household, which means an immense number of places

consecrated to solemn thoughts, to feelings of reverence and devotion. In the face of this it is difficult to understand why the Chinese have so often been called irreligious. Of course, if by religion is meant obedience to a wellpaid and disciplined hierarchy, faith in a definite set of dogmas and condemnation of all non-believers as godless heathens or heretics, then indeed the Chinese are sadly lacking in religion. But assuredly the religious feeling is infinitely wider than any one of the many forms into which it crystallizes—is in fact nothing less than man's whole orientation towards that which he cannot touch, yet is able to feel; that which he cannot see, yet is able to realize; that which he cannot hear, yet is able to answer; that which he cannot understand, yet is allowed to interpret. It is his perception of what may be called the Divine, the Spiritual, the Unknown, the Immaterial, God, the Tao, which is all these and more than these, which is the Changeless in the flux of life and death, the Enduring in the transitoriness of events and things, the Creative in the passively inert, the All-knowing, the All-Patient, the All-Good, the All-Wise, the Almighty, the Infinite in space and time. And because it is infinite, human intelligence, which is finite while working through its physical organs of thought, can only apprehend certain aspects of it. Each race, each stage of social development, each founder of religion, singles out of the infinite splendour the one facet which his mind can adequately mirror. Some powerful intellects, those "to whom God whispers in the ear," like Shakespeare, Goethe, Beethoven, mirror many aspects of the Eternal. That gives their work that depth, that immortality which makes generation after generation come to them for guidance, solace, and inspiration. But even they cannot bring the whole gamut of Infinitude into the compass of earthly speech or earthly harmony. How much less could the founders of man's very earliest religions do so.

Yet it is of the utmost significance to the whole future development of a race which aspect of Immensity fixed their attention, whether it was the superficial or the fundamental, the dark or the radiant, the savage or the tender principles of the Universe that drew their worship to itself.

The very early Egyptians, for instance, were impressed most by the strong, the forceful, the destructive. At a period when they probably still were cannibals they conceived of gods as fiercely fighting and devouring each other. At a later stage of their development, the allilluminating radiance of the Sun Disk, the life-kindling power of its rays, attracted their reverence and eclipsed the older, darker cults; but the bull, the lion, the hawk, the crocodile, symbolizing force not far distant from ferocity, lingered in the people's imagination, explains their delight in representations of animal-headed gods and of Pharaohs holding in one hand a number of helpless prisoners by the hair of their heads and smiting them with the other. The Greeks realized the divine in the play and force of passion, pictured it in the Dionysian frenzy of the Bacchantes, in the feuds, loves, and hatreds of their hot-blooded Olympians. For above all they were artists, and passion, being an indispensable element in the atmosphere that produces art, was to them the supreme reality.

The Germanic tribes, bred in a hard climate where long, dark winters, storm-swept seas, mist-enveloped forests

demanded immense fortitude of mind and body, instinctively selected for their adoration the splendour of struggle, the pride of endurance, the valour of the battlefield. And beyond its blood-stained bleakness, beyond the black wings of the raven virgins, the Valkyrie, they visualized life as a gigantic tree-Yggdrasil-its roots down in mysterious depths of creation, where the Fates dwelt darkly weaving the web of their days for gods and men, where the Power of Evil lurked, to leap out one day and slay Baldur, the God of Light, who suffers and is killed because he is young and beautiful, but who will return in some dream age of bliss and innocence, away in the haze of an ineffably distant dawn. And royal in the shadow of Yggdrasil's branches, listening to their immemorial swaying, Odin, all-knowing and all-wise, with the ravens of the battlefield perched on his shoulders what time the hunger of the spears was stilled. To men brought up under such an inspiration, men who had to become hard if they were to survive at all, resistance to attack, valiancy in fight, was the just thing, the true thing, the thing approved by God. Not for a moment could they have accepted the attitude of the Chinese king who peacefully trekked away with his people from their own home-land because invading barbarians wanted it. The Norse chieftain would have sprung to his weapons and either flung the invader out or perished in the fight.

But to the Chinese pliancy before pressure, obedience to overwhelming facts, is the just thing, the true thing, the thing approved by God. Neither view is wrong, neither is wholly and always right. Lao-Tsze, who articulates the soul, as K'ung-fu-tsze articulates the intellect, of ancient China, teaches that adaptability cures evil.

Which undoubtedly it often does. Nor does adaptability appear so great a hardship where nature is on the whole conceived as kindly. And it was the bountiful aspect of the infinite that attracted the Chinese, above all the beneficent interaction of the rains, the dews, and the sunshine of heaven with the fruitfulness of earth and the labour of man.

The immense tolerance of the sky, which stretches and shines over sea and land, over mountain and plain, over desert and garden, touched an answering chord in the heart of the Chinese. The dark and massive patience of the soil, the silent, slow, but wonderfully stedfast workings of the productive powers of heaven and earth, their dependence on man for appreciation and understanding, and man's dependence on them for birth, nourishment. and being, filled his mind with the harmony of a marvellously simple, a beautifully satisfying scheme. He realized the divine as only a husbandman can realize it, a man whose work and hopes and desires are sown deep into the furrows of his fields, keep time with the rhythm of the seasons, lie cradled on the calm bosom of the earth, shone on and warmed by the sky as by a fervent lover. He saw no flaming Apollo in the dawn, raptures of music, poetry, dancing kindling round him; no swirl of panting Valkyrie in the wrack of storm-clouds; no fulminating Jove, no brooding Odin as the soul and summit of creation, but round him, in him, he felt emanations, influences, harmonies, tendencies, rhythms, tidal waves of expansion and contraction, energies latent or revealed, as it were the systole and diastole of the great heart of the Universe. His imagination was weaker, but his insight deeper. Science has discovered no radiant Apollo in the aura of the sun,

no ride of the Valkyrie in the rush of the gale, but it does know of multitudinous emanations, vibrations, interactions pervading every atom of matter, every fibre of life. Of course, when mirrored in the ancient Chinese mind these had none of the sharpness of outline, the clearness of detail, they show when reflected by the lens of modern science. A halo of myth and mystery, a dreamy incohesion floated round them, but for all that Chinese religion got closer to reality, kept freer from anthropomorphism than any other religion of the world. This gave it a comprehensiveness, a sweet reasonableness, an absence of arrogant fanaticism such as none of the proselytizing or narrowly national cults have been able to attain.

Humbler than the Westerner, because more honest, the Chinese did not make man the centre of his cosmogony to the extent of creating gods in his image; he co-ordinated him with those immense spiritual and physical forces which as heaven and earth completely surrounded his existence. Cognizant of himself as a separate entity within this creation, as a particular point in time and space linked to the past by memory, to the future by imagination, to the present by consciousness, he felt himself acted on by an immense outside world, which experience divided on the one hand into what affected his body and on which his body also could act, on the other into mysterious forces which swept through him in intuitions, dreams, visions, gazed at him in the majesty of the sky, spoke to him through the rhythm of the rising and the setting of the constellations, the succession of the seasons, the laws of growth and decay, the whole fateful order in the sequences of events. This Chinese Trinity of Heaven, Earth, and Man, whether it corresponds to an ultimate metaphysical truth or not. does undoubtedly tally with the facts of human consciousness: and not to have allowed these facts to be dimmed by a cloud of gods, angels, demons, and all that host of magnified mortals wherewith most other races have obscured their vision of the divine, is a superb achievement. There was indeed in indigenous Chinese religion a worship of spirits made in man's image to the extent of requiring offerings of food and drink. They were either the souls of the departed, whom it was natural to picture as not wholly emancipated from their former bodily needs, or spirits conceived in analogy to the ghosts of the dead. But even these were thought of far more as influences and shadow-presences than as concrete beings in human shape with fantastic additions of wings, haloes, animal heads, and so on.

When K'ung-fu-tsze said that absorption in the study of the supernatural was harmful and that it was wisest to keep aloof from ghostly apparitions, he probably expressed the fundamental feeling of the Chinese mind towards matters which transcend man's ordinary experience. It has been called prosaic. It might be truer to say that it plunges beyond the mere accessories of art and poetry straight to their inmost core, namely, the sense of a mystery, a boundlessness, an immensity that defies all clear graphic expression and is indicated most accurately when specified least.

The perfectly imageless Chinese temples may appear bare by the side of those of Egypt, exuberant with gods and goddesses, or of Catholic churches, dazzling with erucifixes, reliquaries and statues; but there is a grandeur in their austere simplicity, a harmony in the proportions of their gateways and terraces, a breadth of vision in their blending of human architecture with the beauty of trees and the spaciousness of the sky, which makes them rich with a peace and a holiness many a sumptuous cathedral fails to call forth.

The most perfect of all these temples is the one dedicated to the worship of Heaven, perhaps the most perfect temple man's yearning towards something higher, purer, more enduring than his own ephemeral existence has fashioned anywhere on earth.

Acres of waving grass and stately trees intersected by pathways, processional avenues, glittering pavilions, where in the restful stillness of all this plenitude of space and light and air the Son of Heaven used to keep the vigil that sanctified him for the great service on the morrow; a service where he knelt three times and prostrated himself nine times before the Supreme, offering to Him in sacrifice the hair and blood of a red bullock, rolls of silks, symbols of jade, but above all offering Him thanks and adoration for all the precious gifts vouchsafed and invoking heavenly blessing on the people in his care.

And there was music—harps, flutes, psalteries, gongs, and bells, and the chanting of glad hymns of peace, mingling, mounting with the fragrant smoke of incense into the cool silver of the dawn, where the last stars paled and merged in the mightier light of day. The ceremony took place just before sunrise on the great mound of three concentric rings of marble faultlessly adjusted, narrowing upwards, the widest at the base measuring two hundred and ten, the upper one still ninety feet in diameter. On some occult principle, the reason for which

escapes us, the whole structure is governed by the number three and its various multiples, especially by its square, nine. The bottom terrace has one hundred and eighty balusters, the second one hundred and eight, the upper one seventy-two; flights of nine steps each lead from one circle to the other, all white, all smooth, all open to the dews of the sky, the glow of the sun, the gold of the stars, the silver of the moon. In ancient China the altar that was covered over was deemed anathematized, accursed, cut off from the benign influences that make for vigour and prosperity.

"The altar of a State that had perished was roofed in, so that it was not touched by the brightness and the warmth of heaven. The altar of Yin at Po had an opening in the wall on the north, so that dimness might be wafted unto it and cold.

"But the great altar of the Son of Heaven was open to receive the gleaming hoar-frost, the bright dews, the wind, the rain, and to allow the emanations of heaven and earth to have full play upon it."

It is easy to see in this nothing but superstition or reminiscences from some primitive astral cult. But let it not be forgotten that where man has ceased to be in touch with the splendour of the sky, with the spaciousness of the untrammelled earth, as when he is cooped up beneath the smoke of overgrown cities, between a welter of roofs, walls, and pavements, his sense of the infinite deteriorates to such an extent it would disappear altogether if not artificially kept alive by traditions saved out of a healthier past.

As usual, the instinct of ancient China led to a truth, though the actual words by which she expressed it were

somewhat fantastic. There is a singular truthfulness too, a power and sureness of touch of striking the absolutely appropriate, in the lines of the altar of Heaven, the elegance of its carvings, the harmonious shape of the sacrificial vessels, the contrast of the lazuli tiles of the encircling walls with the dazzling whiteness of the marble, the restful green of the cypresses, and the transcendent blue of the infinite sky. How deeply they must have gazed into the divine who could plan and execute so superb a monument, and what a glorious conception a people must have had of its ruler to make him the high priest to such an altar. No wonder they above all asked of him that he should be to them as a father whom they could love and reverence as well as sustain and obey, and who would in return protect their weakness, restrain their foolishness, and guide their ignorance into the paths of wisdom. For nothing matters here among the sacred groves and buildings and horizons except wisdom, love, and reverence—the love that cannot rest satisfied till it has shown the source of its being some of the fervour of its adoration; the reverence which knows that even the very mightiest men are but as little children in the untiring hands of God; the wisdom that can hear whispers of His presence in every harmony of line and colour, in every fluid glint of light on shimmering leaf and polished surface, linking them up with the radiant pathways of great suns which move in the unfathomed mystery of immeasurable space.

It is this capture of light from the whole vastness of the horizon, compelling it to flow and splash and sparkle along the curves of three perfect rings of immaculate whiteness laid in a frame of green and lazuli, where the light flows too, but much more softly, as befits what is only framework and accompaniment; this triumphant kindling of lifeless stone and heavy clay with the swiftest, the airiest, the most vital of all things—light—which makes this Temple of Heaven such a wonderful, such a supremely satisfying, solution of the world-old problem of how architecturally to express man's veneration for the source and uttermost summit of his life.

Man's gratitude towards the sustaining power of the earth has been equally beautifully enshrined in the Temple of Agriculture, its wide enclosure over against that of the Temple of Heaven. It is designed on the same lines, though on a smaller scale; has its spaces of waving grass and verdant trees, its glittering tiles, its immortal cypresses, its radiant marbles, its open altar. The same sober absence of images, but chiselled on large blocks of stone representations of rivers, oceans, mountains. For here solemn worship was offered to the fruitfulness of Earth and to her grandeur. The representations are mere outlines, almost reduced to symbols in their conventionalized simplicity, but nevertheless plainly derived from the same inspiration which makes the pictures of rivers and mountains painted by Chinese artists of the best periods so strangely beautiful.

Indeed, no other artists have ever delineated mountain scenery with so penetrating an understanding, and the Chinese may well be considered its master-interpreters, just as the Greek sculptors are the acknowledged master-interpreters of the human body. Some snowy Alps, some heather-clad highlands, some cliffs steeped in the vibrant light of fjords have been painted by Europeans, but the massive swing of gigantic ranges, the

rush of cataracts, the birth of rivers and their endless streaming towards the sea; the terror of avalanche and precipice; the defiance of storm-thinned forests, of gnarled and ancient pines saved to live only by the fierce tenacity of their roots clawing the rocks, biting their way through stubborn hardness to hidden veins of food and soil; the uprush of stupendous peaks away from the warm and varied atmosphere of earth into the passionless calm of that ether whose other shore is the edge of the moon—all these mighty things are reflected in Europe in the pages of Nietzsche's "Zarathustra," in the music of Richard Strauss. They are rendered in their whole unbroken magnificence by the sure, swift strokes of the old Chinese artists' brush. European painters have gathered from them only hasty sketches, photographic fragments.

For they merely look at the mountains. The Chinese loved them, worshipped them, gave them beautiful names—the "Mountain of the Spring of Jade," the "Mountain of an Hundred Flowers"—went to them in pilgrimage, fled to them in weariness, became hermits there and exiled poets; buried emperors in the blue depth of their shadows; exulted in the sharpness of their eagles, mourned with the dimness of their clouds; crowned them with temples, venerated in them the sacred sentinels guarding the cradle of the race; wove myths around them, legends, dreams. Therefore they could paint them in their multiple complexity. Therefore their fullness woke in them long echoes, and their vastness the deep-drawn resonance of answering chords.

What an artist hates he caricatures; of that to which he is indifferent he makes a superficial likeness. But what he loves so much that the image it has traced in his heart gathers to itself all the joy and the throb and the vigour of his blood, that he paints, and paints it so that others, looking on his work, will learn to love as he did. The ancient Chinese, taught by their poets and painters, loved the mountains, the seas, the rivers of their beautiful Earth, loved her for them and for her fruitfulness, and were grateful to her for all her bounty. Therefore out of wood and tiles and open spaces they were able to fashion a temple dedicated to her worship-to nature-worship, a worship pure and holy and straight out of the truth of things, free from all taint of morbid moralizings, whose pitiful heresy that the beauty of Earth is a snare, her discipline a wheel of sorrow, the gifts of her generosity an occasion for sin, never quite succeeded in alienating Chinese intelligence from its own older and grander cults.

But now these are threatened by what is worse than heresy—by sacrilege. For the gospel of commercialism, which sees in the whole beautiful wide earth no object of reverence at all, merely a field for profitable investments, is afoot and out to drag all mankind into the strangling meshes of its net; to force ever more tracts of the world's surface into the orbit of its exploitation—"development" is the official euphuism. If to accomplish this paltry end the peace, the loveliness, and the fertility of vast districts have to be destroyed, free peasants to be turned into sullen gangs of hirelings, entire nations to be set upon each other in a rage of senseless butcheries—what matter, so long as dividends increase!

There is no generosity in the worship of Mammon, no pity in the idolatry of the Golden Calf; the most cruel

because the most subtle, the most powerful of all the monstrous cannibalisms which have darkened the mind of man. It is bred in the sultry luxury of cities as its lineal ancestor, which filled Moses, fresh from the splendour of the mountains, with such ungovernable wrath, was bred in the idleness of a crowded camp. It has no regard for divine commandments engraved on stone, no faith in the ideals throbbing in the conscience of the world; ledgers are its holy bible, quotations on the tape the rosary on which it fumbles at its prayers.

It builds no altars to the majesty of Heaven, no temples to the fruitfulness of Earth, only exchanges, offices—thousands of offices for the registering of cunning bargains, the auditing of enormous balance-sheets: offices unlit by a single ray of sunshine, untouched by one breath of air sweet with the fragrance of great fields, strong with the freshness of high hills. Like some deadly leprosy it is spreading from sea to sea, from pole to pole, disfiguring country after country with huge patches of machine-made ugliness, tainting nation after nation with its poison, branding race after race with the stigma of its relentless slavery.

There are many signs that it has spread to China also, won influential converts among its inhabitants, making them indifferent to the things their ancestors prized so highly, blighting with shallow materialism the awe, the reverence, the gratitude these felt towards the spiritual influences around them. For the neglect of monasteries too full of greedy and ineffectual monks there is a reason; much excuse for the neglect of city-walls grown valueless against attack. There can be neither reason nor excuse for the neglect of temples so inspiringly beautiful, so

essentially sacred, as the Temple of Heaven and the Temple of Earth. The need for such green spaces of holiness and loveliness, of ingathering of all that makes for spiritual strength, was never greater than in this age of fermenting ideas, shifting valuations, unconsidered changes—an age so deafened by the noise of its own boasting, so dazzled by the glare of its many inventions, it stands in imminent danger of losing every vision of the divine. And where that is gone mankind has no greatness in the years of wealth, no guidance in the hour of peril, no healing in the day of woe.

But young China is too pleased with the cut of its new clothes, too inexperienced in the use of authority, to take much thought of its wondrous yesterdays or of its threatening to-morrows. So the lustrous tiles of its great sanctuaries are left to slip down and get broken, weeds to shoot up between the white slabs of the pavements, marble balusters to crack and fall. And there is no Son of Heaven to symbolize the ruler's care for his people's most essential labour, by each year ploughing the first furrow in the field dedicated to the memory of Shen Nung, the Emperor-God of Husbandry.

The same sad note of forsakenness hovers round the Temple of Confucius, that third sanctuary a vigorous China would preserve with unfailing devotion. Even apart from its immense ethical significance, it is full of the joy and repose of a fine piece of architecture. The superb roof of amber-coloured tiles rests on an intricacy of eaves richly painted in blues and greens reminiscent of the brilliant effects of a peacock's tail. In the courtyard finely carved memorial tablets lift their whiteness against the subdued green of cypresses said to have been planted there almost a thousand years ago.

The spirit stairway leading to the main building is one enormous slab of marble, deeply carved with five interlaced dragons. The sinewy suppleness of their coils, the grip of their claws, the live vigour of their mouths, are admirably rendered. But, artistically, perhaps the most impressive are the massive shafts of bright vermilion, which in four long and stately rows divide the great hall as it were into a number of aisles. Everything is red in that hall—the pillars, the altars, the lanterns, the spirit tablets, the doors, the woodwork of the windows—red with the faintest touch of gold—red—bright, strong, and true.

No other colour, except maybe yellow, would have stood the test of being lavished in such profusion. But red, with its warmth, its joyfulness, its triumphant assertion of the will to live, and to live gladly in the broad blaze of the sun, is superbly satisfying in a temple dedicated to the memory of the man who knew that life was great, because he also knew that it is man's birthright to be noble.

There is no statue of him in this sanctuary, only the vermilion lacquer tablet dedicated to "The Master and Model of Ten Thousand Generations."

Which is not flattery, but truth.

On the human plane the finest master, the greatest model, ever given a nation to follow. Missionaries, who instinctively felt that his towering greatness knocked all the sense out of their activity in China, have done their best to reduce his size to the minute proportions of their own vision, and have spread abroad a most unattractive picture of him, representing him as a dreary formalist never so happy as when going through elaborate

ceremonies round some sacrificial vessels, as a pedant who, dried and shrivelled like the ancient books he was so fond of collecting, typified in 500 B.C. the inelastic bureaucratic mind, swathed in red tape and servile worship of precedent, into which Chinese officialdom ossified towards the middle of the nineteenth century A.D.—that is, after a lapse of twenty-three centuries. And this they adduce as the main reason for the hold he obtained over his countrymen! As if at any time or in any latitude the pedant and the formalist, belonging as they necessarily do to the parasitic, non-vital type of mind, could exercise any influence beyond the orbit of their physical existence or the sphere of an official department. K'ung-fu-tsze, be it remembered, was out of office far oftener than in. The followers he gathered round him, and who loyally adhered to him through all the hardships and perils of his wanderings, were not underlings dependent on his goodwill for professional advancement, but free men who came to him for instruction and promotion in nothing but moral wisdom. This alone proves that he possessed that live, powerful class of intellect which produces the food, not the mere husks, of learning, gives its disciples bread, not stones.

A further proof of the greatness of his teaching lies in the fact that it was scorned and ridiculed by many of his contemporaries, but drew to itself in a steadily increasing degree the admiration of posterity. Now, nothing will withstand the most inexorable of all criticisms, that of time, except what is intrinsically great—that is, embodying a maximum of human achievement; intrinsically true—that is, never contradicting the constantly accumulating facts of human knowledge; intrinsically

beautiful—that is, so full of balance, harmony, and just proportion as to mark a point of rest, of equilibrium, to which human allegiance inevitably returns after all its headlong fluctuations into opposing extremes. And the glimpses that have been preserved of him while moving about among his fellow-beings clearly show him to have been a man as strong in the generous warmth of his affections as in the profundity of his intellect and the integrity of his character.

At one time he is described as tenderly directing the steps of a blind musician, a man of no ancestry, no wealth, no importance, only deeply marked with that strongest of all bonds of union beween one conscious life and another—affliction. So K'ung-fu-tsze, full of the reverence of pity, did his utmost to kindle a smile of happiness and gratitude on the sightless face that should have been a shining window and was only a blank wall between the soul which stirred within and the great outer world to which it belonged and towards which it yearned so patiently.

Another time we see him endure the desperate feeling of utter helplessness to help which shames the healthy at the sight of the unwillingly dissolving; stand the insistence of their dreadful grip, and stretch his kind, warm hand through the lattice to clasp the hand of his disciple Po Niu, who lay dying there of leprosy, the ghastly spots no longer to be hidden, the whole suffering body already dropping into repulsiveness of irretrievable decay.

And we see him in sorrow, overwhelmed by the loss of Yen Yuan, the disciple who held the fullness of his love and understanding like a strong protecting shield between his Master and the loneliness which is the fate appointed unto all who soar too high above the crowd.

"God has forsaken me! God has forsaken me!" he cried, and would not be comforted.

For he knew death was a great unfathomed mystery, the grave a chasm torn suddenly across the seeming solid web of life, swallowing the young and lovely, leaving the old stunned and trembling on the brink, a silence and a darkness whence none returned to help the living bear their grief. Hope could people it—visions—dreams—but the superb courage of his mental honesty would not stoop to the tempting jugglery which pretends to turn these hopes and dreams and visions into undeniable realities, into indubitable truth.

"We who know not yet what life is, how should we know of death?"

When he felt the presence of the dread mystery creep close to him and the shadow of separation from this earth, which to the furthest reach of his memory had lent his thoughts their significance, his actions all their meaning, sadness fell upon him. For he loved this vivid, coloured world, not as a thing from which to extract a maximum of pleasure, wealth, or power, but as the place wherein it was possible to exercise benevolence and to acquire the shining jewel of righteousness. All the days of his life had been devoted to these two things. Following them, he had suffered poverty and exile, borne the envy and malignity of men and their terrible stupidity; he had preached and taught by words, by action, and by example. Now his days were to be ended, with so much suffering left unsuccoured, so many wrongs left unredressed, so many errors unrectified.

Only fifty years of labour! And he needed a full hundred.

What were a hundred years out of all eternity? But he knew they would not be given, knew that his work, like all human work, would be left a fragment none might ever come to finish wholly.

So his mind was heavy with a sense of failure and the closing down of hope. And he had dreamt that he was sitting between the pillars of his house, in front of him the offerings which they place before the dead. He understood the dream, rose, and went outside, his staff almost slipping from the hands suddenly grown feeble, their hold on the familiar things of life strangely relaxed and ineffectual.

Went and gazed into the dawn which heralded a day wherein he felt he no longer had a part, and he sang to himself, as was his wont:

> The great mountain must crumble, The strong beam must break, The wise man wither away like a plant.

Then, the greyness of death on his features, in his heart the sadness of death, he crept back into the house. To Ts'ze-Kung, a disciple hastening to him, he said:

"Ts'ze, what makes you so late? No capable ruler arises; there is none under heaven will take me as his guide. My time has come." And he lay down upon his bed, and in one week his mighty spirit passed away.

His disciples mourned for him and wailed for him and buried him, lived on what he had taught them, handed it down like a precious heirloom, and were faithful to their trust. K'ung-fu-tsze, ever extraordinarily modest, had underestimated the value of his labours. He had built a great deal better than he thought, built far beyond the understanding of his own age, right into the splendid future of his race, perhaps into the future of all mankind, now so pitiably misled, and in such urgent need of a strong, true voice out of the deep calm of the past.

And Kung-fu-tsze's is a glorious voice. It would be well if what the prefect of a frontier town in Wei fore-saw were to come true beyond the boundaries of China: if above the huckstering of our markets, the baseness of our council-chambers, the oppression of our factories, that voice were to be hung up as a great bell to ring out the changeless call to the only thing that truly matters: Loving-kindness, Loving-kindness; reminding men their most precious birthright is not to possess but to beautify this earth, not to hate and to destroy but to benefit and build.

The ideal Confucius pointed out for imitation was not a saint withdrawn from the activities of ordinary life into an artificial peace of meditation; not a superman built on such cyclopean lines as only to fit an exceptional genius, but a man of simple honesty, charity, and self-control, whose righteousness was greater than his courage, though he feared nothing but the presence of guilt in his own heart; who comforted the old; loved, cherished, and reverenced the young; who kept guard over his loneliness that no evil thoughts should darken his mind; who held ill-gotten wealth and honours as unsubstantial as floating clouds; who formed no judgments on hearsay talk, and above all things hated pride, hypocrisy, contentiousness, and greed; an upright, kind, and generous man, such as every one might grow to be who would love nobility

of character with a fervour as great as that usually bestowed on sensual delights, and who in his calm serenity found all he needed, because he kept his mind attuned to the glorious melodies vibrating between Heaven, Earth, and Man.

A fine ideal, possibly not the very highest ever shown the world, but one that can be followed without branding all desires as sin, without neglecting civic duties, without hardening the will and choking tolerance in the airless cage of self-righteous religious sects.

The greatness of K'ung-fu-tsze lies in this, that he never posed as a direct emissary from a god who would be angry if his message were rejected, never painted a heaven of eternal bliss above men to direct their effort upward, nor opened a fiery hell beneath their feet to teach them to tread warily; that he merely found what was best in man himself, his tendency to benevolence, his joy in goodness, his thirst for justice, his passionate hope for the ideal-found these, and took them and held them up on high, his flaming banner, his triumphant "In hoc signo vinces," rallying round which a world should be created purged of the greed that makes oppressors, freed of the lust of power that begets hatreds, fears, and cruelties; a world in which the master-bond should be sympathy and reverence, where every man enabled to lead a righteous, noble human life, giving full play to all the light and sweetness in him, would let the mean, the violent, and the distorted die down in him for very shame. Such a world, would it not be worth creating, straining every nerve, unifying all human efforts now worse than scattered, squandered in strife and self-devouring competition, to bring about on earth at last?

But blindness has fallen on the eyes of men, deafness on their ears. It is not to the clear bell ringing justice and goodwill in God's blue sky they care to listen. The jingle of hoarded cash across the counter, lascivious songs the screaming headlines of a reptile Press, these are the tunes to which they dance, and the three great virtues of the ideal man, wisdom, benevolence, integrity, are fallen grey and cold even as the ashes of incense burnt long ago upon an altar to which the world has lost the way. And is reluctant to find it again. Because it has made the wolves its shepherds, elected as its moral guides those who have craft instead of knowledge, prejudice instead of principles, insolence instead of courage.

The days in which Confucius lived may have been sorely troubled with greed, treachery, and violence in high places and in low, as our steam-and-iron civilization has its unkempt proletariat and its wirepulling politicians, but at least the faith in better things had not shrunk to a forlorn hope. Men did not look down for guidance to minds considerably below their own modest level. They looked up to minds immeasurably higher. Where moderns place the stump-orator and the leader-scribbler, they put the scholar and the sage.

A notable difference.

Now, the Chinese sages seem to have been like the ancient Hebrew prophets, both the mouthpiece and guide of public opinion, which can, quite independently of a cheap Press, develop into an articulate force, a bulwark of liberty no government dares disregard. Also like the Hebrew prophets, they were without any influence or following but what they acquired through their own efforts. And these efforts were not directed to secure

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wealth and yet more wealth, in order to be able to corrupt law, politics, and public opinion. They were centred on the vastly more profitable task of acquiring insight into the eternal order of the world, knowledge of the way which the sense of the divine in humanity demanded should be trodden. This was called wisdom, nearer to holiness than to pure learning, yet partaking of the nature of both. To acquire, to teach, and, when opportunity offered, to apply this wisdom was the scholar's only claim to attention and support. The divorce between religion and public affairs not yet having taken place, it followed that the people demanded a certain measure of spiritual as well as worldly greatness in their rulers.

Of course they were often disappointed, but the scholars were the body of men set apart to supply what was felt to be a pressing need. Having made a profound study of the art of government and keeping in close touch with current politics, they were always ready for official employment whenever the Son of Heaven or one of his great semi-independent feudatories had the strength of character to call them to their councils. Presumably their numbers were recruited from among those whose talents and mental independence outgrew the circle of the family group and who preferred to face loneliness and destitution rather than abandon their search for that rare and difficult jewel, true and unswerving wisdom.

The destitution was often very real. Many a sage had to live in a mere hovel in a miserable alley, the outer fence of bamboos and thorns, the inner door stopped up by brushwood, one day's pittance eked out for two; but it was as much part of his discipline cheerfully to endure poverty and mean condition as not to be elated by wealth

and honours. Was he not a philosopher, "loyalty and integrity his helmet and his coat of mail, magnanimity his buckler, righteousness his sword, benevolence his banner, steadfastness his shield? Would he not face death rather than be false to his ideals? Could jade be accounted precious when compared with these? Could gold buy that harmony with heavenly laws, that restful balance, that calm serenity, which came to him who had made benevolence his constant dwelling, righteousness his chosen path? Was not virtue the only jewel worth possessing? Were not gentleness and goodness the deep roots of humanity, reverence and principle the rich soil whereon it grew, humility its foliage, magnanimity the glory of its blossoming, generosity the sweet perfume of its fruit? Wherefore the scholar untroubled by external light or darkness cared for nothing but for their firm establishment."

No easy task; for the ancient Chinese with their passion for thoroughness, their sharp vision for fraudulent shams, expected from the sage that he should teach righteousness by the example of his whole life even more than by the eloquence of his words. It needed the strength of a Confucius or a Lao-Tsze fully to maintain so exacting a standard. Many must have fallen short of it. But that, in order to attract public attention and approval, a man had to devote himself to indefatigable study, train himself to unfailing gentleness and dignity of demeanour corresponding to inner nobility of disposition, that kings should be expected to choose their ministers among philosophers famous only for the purity of their lives and the loftiness of their principles, shows an extraordinarily healthy state of society.

Another point indicating a remarkably high level of intelligence among the Chinese of those days is that these keepers of their conscience were not compelled to claim any supernatural sanction for their admonitions. They found two simple weapons quite sufficient: first, the truth of their maxims, a truth they did not dogmatically assert, but which they patiently demonstrated and carefully proved. Secondly, the shining example of the great kings and sages of old. Altogether they had a strong faith in the efficacy of example, their profound knowledge of human nature having convinced them that the vast majority are instinctively gregarious, therefore necessarily imitative, both incapable and afraid of original thought or independent action. They also knew that the one condition of any genuine improvement is the rectification of the heart; that all specific prohibitions and injunctions are mere surface bubbles compared to the bending of the main current of a man's thoughts towards sincerity and justice, to the inward resting of the will on benevolence and righteousness. Wherefore they endeavoured to convince, not to cajole or terrify.

No vehement denunciations, no fiery "shalt nots" blaze in their vocabulary. They feel less, but they know more, than the Hebrew prophets. Not, like these, passionate poets from the desert pouring out to semi-nomads threats of the wrath of God or intoxicating promises of His rewards, they are polished gentlemen reasoning with a people the discipline of whose civilization was old enough to flow calmly and naturally in the channels of their blood. Apocalyptic visions plucked from torrid rocks around Dead Seas would have been received with a smile of critical incredulity by the shrewd peasants and cultured

aristocrats to whom the Chinese scholar had to bring his message. He culled his visions from ancient history, from the unfailing order, the deep serenity of nature, from the endless, yet so strangely unchanging records of the human heart. He appealed not to the imagination but to the reason of his hearers, and what he offered them was not mystical religion but practical philosophy. Not, however, the precise philosophy of modern universities. Though the sages reasoned and proved their principles by logic, the atmosphere in which their teaching was steeped was not scientific-it was emotional; and the emotion on which they relied most to translate verbal wisdom into living thoughts and deeds was that of loving-kindness, the innate compassion which makes one being understand and feel the pain and pleasure of another. According to K'ung-fu-tsze, the one rule that should never be departed from was the rule of charity: "Do not unto others what you would not they should do to you."

His most celebrated follower, Meng-tsze, wrote:

"Compassion is the wide house in which the world should dwell."

"Benevolence is the truest mark of man."

Mo Ti, a sage of the fourth century B.C., who shared the fate of all supreme idealists and was misunderstood even by men pursuing the same aims, saw in universal love the supreme good, the paramount goal of human effort, the only infallible remedy for human misery. Fragments of his teaching have been preserved:

"That which wise and holy men consider their special duty is to promote all that will profit the nation, and to remove what injures it. "The mutual attacks of State on State, the mutual robberies of man on man, these and such as these are the things injurious to the realm. And from what do we find on examination that they arise?

"Is it not from the want of mutual love?

"Here is a prince who only loves his own State and does not love his neighbour's. Therefore he does not shrink from raising all the powers of his State to attack the other. Here is a man who only loves himself and does not love his neighbour. Therefore he does not shrink from using all his cunning to rob his neighbour.

"Thus it happens that princes not loving one another have their wars and battlefields, men their mutual robberies. Yea, the majority not loving one another, the strong make prey of the weak; the rich do despite to the poor; the noble insult the mean; the crafty impose upon the innocent.

"All the miseries, usurpations, enmities, and hatreds in the world, when traced to their origin, will be found to arise from the want of mutual love.

"The only way to prevent their arising is the law of universal love and the interchange of mutual benefits. It is objected: 'True, if there were this universal love it would be good. But it is the most difficult thing in the world.'

"This is merely because the immense advantages of the law are not realized. Take the case of assaulting a city, or of a battlefield, or of sacrificing one's life for the sake of honour: this is felt by every one to be terribly hard. Yet at the ruler's behest both officers and people are able to accomplish it. How much more easily, then, might they achieve universal love and the interchange of mutual benefits, which means happiness instead of hardship.

"For when a man loves others, they respond to and love him. When a man benefits others, they respond to and benefit him. When a man injures others, they respond to and injure him. When a man hates others, they respond to and hate him. What genuine difficulty is there in the matter? It is only that rulers will not trouble to govern on this principle and so officers do not carry it out in their practice.

"If now the rulers of States truly and sincerely wish all in them to be prosperous and dislike any being poor if they desire good government and dislike disorder—they ought to practise universal love and the interchange of mutual benefits.

"This was the law of the sage emperors. It is the way to effect good government, and it may not but be striven after."

And Mo Ti himself strove after it all his life, and never wearied preaching:

"Above all, inculcate the love of others."

It was the extreme development of the faith on which K'ung-fu-tsze and his followers based their teaching that man is naturally good, born with an instinct for kindliness which would make him respond to every act of love and generosity shown him.

Wherein the Chinese sages are so much better inspired than most modern thinkers is just this resolute fixing of their attention on the ethical, not, as is the fashion to-day, on the economic needs of society. Their observation of nature, which though not scientific was close and intimate, had taught them that in physical strength, in mobility. in skill at finding food and shelter for his young, in pugnacity, man was born inferior to many animals; that his superiority to even the swiftest or strongest of these was solely to be found in a moral sense producing selfrestraint, in an instinct for compassion urging to all manner of charitable and beneficent actions, such as supporting the aged, cherishing orphans and solitaries. tending the sick, down to the taming of animals. It was in these two gifts, the gift of righteousness and the gift of benevolence, that they saw the meaning of his existence, the essence of his being, the fulfilment of his mission. Only when content to rest on them could he hope to build up a happy, strong, and truly prosperous community; only when developing these did he obey the bright ordinances of Heaven; only when following their guidance did he move along the path of inner harmony with the divine. The idea was not only beautiful, it was and is fundamentally true. Mankind, forsaking it, blindly looking for its destiny in unbridled competition, in pitiless knockout-blows to detested rivals, in the letting loose of all ambitions and all appetites, has drifted into a nightmare blackness of neglected slums, a lurid redness of infernal battlefields, a starving of all that makes life serene and beautiful and setting up in its place hustle, clamour, greed, and such a load of ceaseless labour as must end by crushing every semblance of humanity out of the wretched beings caught in the wheels, scorched in the furnace of so unnatural a system.

Hear the warning-note of old Confucian wisdom:

"When man's desires and aversions are not controlled from within, and increasing knowledge tempts ever more astray from without, he cannot come back to himself, and his heavenly principle is extinguished.

"Then will he give the utmost indulgence to all the appetites whereby men may be possessed, and from his heart, grown deceitful and rebellious, flow disorder, licentiousness, and violence."

Again:

"Why speak of profit? Is there not righteousness and benevolence? They should suffice. If the ruler asks, 'What will bring profit to my kingdom?' then the great officers say, 'What will bring profit to our families?' And the minor officials and the people will say, 'What will bring profit to ourselves?'

"And they will all try to snatch this profit the one from the other. This endangers the whole State. Those who put righteousness last and profit first never rest satisfied without resorting to robbery.

"Let the ruler say, 'Righteousness and benevolence,' then all is well. Why use that word 'profit'?"

It has been said that K'ung-fu-tsze was inclined to narrow this benevolence to his favourite virtue of filial piety, the exercise of which did not extend beyond the family. But the family of his days embraced a far wider circle, and the term "filial piety" meant much more than in Europe.

"Set up filial piety and it will fill the space from earth to heaven; spread it out and it will cover the ground to the four seas; hand it down to future ages and from dawn to night it will be observed; proclaim it east and west and north and south and it will be the law for men, and in their obedience to it they will not fail."

Obviously filial piety stood for a deep and inspiring

passion. Also the only State K'ung-fu-tsze knew was literally an extension of the clan and an agglomeration of related tribes. The identification of the feeling of loyalty towards the sovereign with the love a son felt for his father was therefore by no means forced. As the State grew by the absorption of neighbouring but alien barbarians, the necessity for a wider term made itself felt, and was met by Mo Ti's principle of universal love. The preaching of this same great principle by Jesus Christ also needed for its historical basis a World-Empire, i.e. a State grown out of the fusion, often of a forcible kind, of States originally separated one from the other by race, speech, and tradition. On so heterogeneous a compound, Rome with its hard materialism could only impress outward uniformity; it was the task of the law of mutual love to vitalize and sweeten it with inner concord.

It is by no means strange ancient Chinese wisdom and the paramount lesson of Christianity should be identical. They both spring from a profound understanding of human nature and of what it needs for its finest development. In its inmost core human nature varies little, either in time or space. Wherefore, six hundred years before Christ, Lao-Tsze was able to say:

"The holy man is ever a true helper of human beings, therefore he turns away from no one; ever a true helper of all creatures, therefore he abandons none.

"The good man is the teacher of the non-good, and the non-good is the treasure of the good."

"Requite enmity with kindness."

"To the good I would be good; to the evil I would be good also, in order to make them good. "With the faithful I would keep faith; with the treacherous I would keep faith also, that they may become faithful."

Like Buddha, like Jesus Christ, he saw that not in retaliation and revenge, only in unfailing kindness, lies the true solution of that most urgent and most difficult of all problems, the extermination of evil, the ending of bitterness and strife. And he abhorred strife as being contrary to that profound repose, that passionless calm, that ultimate unity beyond good and evil, beyond birth and death, that eternally creative Infinitude from which the myriad things proceed and into which they all return when they have fulfilled their destiny in the individual, the differentiated, whose existence is a constant rising up and sinking back, a circular movement, which movement is the immutable or the natural order, or, as Lao-Tsze also called it, the essence of life.

The absolute, the inconceivably perfect before heaven came into being or earth, he called the Tao, but said:

"The name which can be uttered is not its eternal name.

- "The nameless is the essence of the Universal.
- "The nameable is the nature of the Individual.
- "He who is free from desire sees clearly.
- "He who is full of desire sees confusedly.
- "These two categories are one, but develop separately.
- "They are the Unfathomable, the Unfathomable of the Unfathomable, the Gate of the Supreme Mystery."

Mystery—mystery of beginnings, mystery of growth, mystery of tendencies, mystery of disintegration, that is what attracted him, what he gave his life to discover, what he faced a lonely death to follow.

Unlike K'ung-fu-tsze his younger contemporary, who felt that the ills of the times needed grappling with by a determined concentration of effort on active moral improvement, Lao-Tsze believed these ills were due to an excess of activity and could best be cured by a radical return to a primitive state of non-knowing, non-desiring, non-governing, a state of peaceful, contented, and kindly anarchy. That grows best which is left to grow freely according to the bent of its nature, like the lilies of the field which toil not, neither do they spin.

To teach without speaking, to accomplish without willing, to know without watching, to possess without conquering, to progress without stirring, was his ideal for human conduct, as conforming most to the way of Heaven, which wins without fighting, which is obeyed without commanding, and which without calling draws all things unto itself.

He did not originate the mysticism whereof he was the greatest exponent. Its beginnings reach back as far as the semi-legendary Yellow Emperor, perhaps beyond. Is it not rooted in the very structure of the human brain, with its perennial thirst to know and its tragic inability to understand what it has not actually experienced?

But Lao-Tsze deepened this ancient mysticism to the utmost reach of human thought, and the road his genius traced over the unfathomable abyss of the unknown is still luminous as the thousand stars of the Milky Way. Following what seems a well-nigh universal instinct of mankind, he identified the Tao, this ultimate source, this creative, vitalizing impulse of existence, with the supreme goal and guide of human morality, with what Heaven has established as a fundamental tendency of human

endeavour, and whereof it sets man a constant example in the immense tolerance, the imperturbable calm, of nature's laws and sequences.

Little is known of Lao-Tsze's life. His name stands out free from that vapour of anecdotes which drags great men down into the gossip of the mediocre. He was born about 604 B.C. in a village, K'üh-Yen: became a scholar and keeper of the royal archives of Chou, and lived in Lo, the capital, where the Son of Heaven, notwithstanding the growing independence of the great feudatories, still kept up an impressive show of power. Twice a year he duly performed the sacrificial ceremonies at the Temples of Heaven and Earth, their altars clear and open like a mirror, wherein to gather all the benign influences of air and soil, the vast enclosures sacred and undefiled by the faintest breath of indifference or doubt. In his palace in the Hall of Light he received the princes of the realm in audience. The walls were eloquent with paintings of the long succession of rulers of the Middle Kingdom, from the three mighty Emperors Yao, Shun, and Yü downwards. Words of praise or warning were added to each of these grave figures, that those who had the eyes to see should read there the secret of the greatness of kings. Many fruitful years did Lao-Tsze spend near such inspiring surroundings. But late in life he left all this and withdrew into the wilderness beyond the western borders of the realm.

Perhaps it was in spring that he began his pilgrimage in spring, when the upward rush of the sap in a million hidden fibres communicates a strange unrest even to the heart of sages; when the hills were fragrant with azaleas echoing in the sheen of coral and amber-tinted petals

the gorgeous colours of the sunset sky above them. And swallows darted through the sky, their lithe bodies vibrant with the joy of life. Larks rose up to it out of the vivid greenness of the fields for one last song before the night. From rocky outspurs of the hills these fields extended to the furthest edge of the horizon: here and there a winding lane, a road—clusters of the dwellings of the dead in the shadow of great trees; bunches of the dwellings of the living inside flowering zerebas-homesteads with their upright men and their bad men, their rich and their poor, their kind mothers and their sharptongued shrews; and a river, the dip of fishing-nets beyond the reeds, willows steeping the pliant silver of their leaves in the opalescent sky, their whole image in the mirror of the waters; waters glittering, gliding onward, eastward, as though in endless quest of stars that have not yet risen, of mornings that have still to dawn.

And yonder, already merging into the dimness which befalls what we put behind us, what we break off from our present life, the walls and towers and red-eaved temples of the city, the dust of whose streets still clung to his sandals. A sound of fish-skin drums to warn the townsfolk that the gates would soon be closed; a great percussion of gongs to keep off malignant spirits during the darkness of the night. Then evening—nothing but evening and the abundance of its peace, the deepening wonder of its stillness, the growing glory of its stars.

And perhaps Lao-Tsze in that hour of farewells thought fondly of some loyal friend who used to listen to him and talk to him, and who would miss him, sitting down for the first time to an unshared evening meal. But there is no help in the companionship of man to one who is seeking that of Heaven. Was it the yearning for the solitude wherein alone great thought can ripen, was it the deep voice of the mountains with their challenge to discover what lay behind their walls of immemorial rock, a bar of massive lazuli athwart the splendour of the setting sun, that had tempted him to leave the safety and the calm routine of his musings among his precious bamboo books? Was it just weariness at poring over records traced by human hands, impatience at their broken light, longing to reach beyond the pale reflection to the fountain-head of wisdom, to discover, in closer proximity to the sky, the secret of immortal life?

Of his free will he went, moved to go by an impulse stronger than the habits of long years, mightier than the weariness of age; and surely, before increasing distance and thickening shadows wholly blurred the picture of this fruitful Chinese evening plain, he stretched his arm out over it and blessed it, and gave it as his farewell gift the secret of undying loveliness.

Ere he passed quite away into the unknown he rested in a lonely frontier fort at the pass of Han-Ku with Yin Hi, a warden of the marches. Yin Hi persuaded him to write a record of his thoughts, so that his wisdom should not be lost to future generations.

What Lao-Tsze wrote in this furthest outpost of Chinese civilization guarding a western mountain-pass is the Tao Te King the Book of the Way and the Right Line, the most wonderful swan-song ever uttered.

He wrote it and passed on—no one knows whither, as no one knows where it was he died—in some hermit-cell among the mountains; in some far settlement where very simple human beings brought him their offerings,

looking upon him as a messenger of God; or fallen on the way, struck down by sudden weakness. No one can tell.

But with his swan-song he had won immortal life.

In the wear and tear of the centuries, Taoism lost the mountain splendour Lao-Tsze had bestowed on it. It is the nature of the multitude to reduce to its own size, to deface to its own likeness, the divine gifts great prophets bring down from the radiant summits into the hot dust of the plains.

For there always is the lure of the exciting, the miraculous, the wonderful, so much more potent to delight and comfort the masses than the calm austerity of truth.

Gradually mysticism was vulgarized into magic, and the great faith in immortality through morally transcending the limitations of the individual, through becoming one with the infinite Tao by a profound understanding of its meaning and a whole-hearted surrender to its laws, dwindled and coarsened into a futile quest for the elixir of everlasting physical existence. Old superstitions and new, half-submerged tribal deities and freshly invasive Buddhist sutras and services, Mongol persecution, the drawing away of the vast majority of the intelligent and educated into the fold of a Confucianism organized into an officially sanctioned cult-all these adverse influences helped to drag Taoism down to its present level, even further removed from the greatness of the Tao Te King than modern established churches are from the holiness of the Sermon on the Mount.

There are still several Taoist monasteries and temples lingering on in that impoverished, semi-comatose condition fallen on so many Chinese institutions since the Boxer tragedy.

The finest of these temples is the Tung Yueh Miao, dedicated to "Him who rivals Heaven," namely, the T'ai Shan, the sacred mountain in Shan Tung. It is built on the same harmonious plan as most Chinese temples and palaces—gateways, courtyards, some with finely shaped bronzes for burnt-offerings, others with white stelæ resting on the patient backs of enormous tortoises and dreamy in the evergreen twilight of cypresses planted centuries ago by men who still understood the art of planting; cloistered shrines around the courtyards, in between them marble terraces and red-pillared halls with huge curved roofs of dazzling tiles.

But whereas the great sanctuaries like the Temple of Heaven are void of images, this Tung Yueh Miao is crowded with an entire population of divinities—kind ones, cruel ones, beautiful ones, ugly ones, consoling and terrifying ones. There even is a sacred horse, almost life-size, skilfully cast in brass. He is believed to be full of medicinal virtue. By rubbing the afflicted part against him, healing or at least relief was sure to follow, and the unfortunate animal has one of his eyes half obliterated but brightly shining as a result of thousands of devout patients having sought this curative friction. It reminds one of the saintly toe of St. Peter in Rome, kissed into the same brilliancy by the same credulity.

Most of us know better now, and prefer scientifically tested antiseptic ointment to a public rubbing-post, however sacred. Yet there is an element of truth in the old error, as there is a margin of error in the latest scientific truth. Healing will come to most pain, comfort to many

sorrows, if the stricken has the faith to lift his suffering out of the narrow orbit of his personal life, where it chokes and tortures him, and to link it up with the vast range of universal laws and sequences, where it will teach and improve him. So, maybe, the bronze horse really helps some of the misery that crawls to him unlearned and unwashed, but with the sincerity of absolute confidence.

Artistically, it is by far the best work in the temple. The other statues, mainly wood or plaster, are ordinary in design and mechanical in execution, obviously dating from a period when the original inspiration had already hardened into a stereotyped and lifeless mould.

The popular idea of the divine scheme of future rewards and punishments is expressed in extremely unlovely groups of gods, demons, saints, and sinners, placed in sixty-five large niches all around the cloisters. The good men bring their offerings of jade and pearls and rolls of silk, and are ultimately borne on azure clouds to the fields of the blessed; the evil-doers are seized upon by ferocious devils and subjected to a variety of abominable tortures. Evidently the popular idea of justice here, as elsewhere, is so defaced with revenge and cruelty as to become nothing but a fresh injustice, a new and graver wrong-doing added to the first. The dispenser of these unilluminating rewards and retributions is the Old Man from the Mountains, a bearded being, in his far origins probably a deified chieftain who ruled highlanders and lowlanders with a strong but just and generous hand from his blockhouse in the hills. His daughter, the "Princess of the Coloured Clouds," has followed him into this temple. In the music of her name there

float, as in the filmy folds of a pearl-spangled veil, all the fragrant beauty of clear dawns, all the brilliancy of dews on the brim of flowers bright amidst the grass of mountain meadows untouched by the foot of man.

But she has dwelt in the dust of cities a long long while, and what the poor women who worship at her altar ask of her is not the power to exult at the daily wonder of the rising of the sun, to throb in answering gladness to the jubilation of the rebirth of light upon the earth, but some concrete gift of outward circumstance—good luck in business affairs, a son, an easy labour, some passing thing round which they have for the moment centred their little hopes of happiness. This, perhaps, is the greatest anguish of the spirits, that scarcely any of the living demand of them their best; that with their hands full of imperishable treasures, the hands of their supplicants only stretch up to them for toys. And the big god in the most imposing of these shrines looks as if, wearied by the endless futility of human prayers, he had withdrawn into the deep orange folds of his wide silk robe to muse unhindered on those imponderable things which alone are worth praying for.

He might almost be a Buddha, he seems so remote, so detached from the little fret of worship that goes on somewhere around the lowest steps of his golden throne; so lost in the blessedness of an infinite Nirvana, unattainable by feeble men. The gigantic scale of his proportions is undoubtedly inspired by the traditions of Indian taste which Buddhism carried into China. There was much else it carried there; much that it carried before it. Art, literature, philosophy, it compelled them all into the orbit

of its influence, which at one time was practically irresistible, the greatest power anywhere.

Starting from an insignificant corner of Northern India, it spread over the whole of it, over Further India to the Islands, to Turkestan, Tibet, Mongolia, China, Korea, Japan, probably also through Persia to Syria and Palestine. Like a huge flood it burst upon Asia: gods and kings, rich and poor, men and women were swept into its current, even little children flung into the glittering eddies by their hypnotized parents. It was more than a flood, for to the tidal wave overflowing from the valley of the Ganges answered a seismic wave of a profound popular upheaval in all the countries deluged by the Buddhist propaganda.

Everything, the home, the village, the town, the State, one's own body, was blocked from view by the haunting presence, the gigantic image of that great new golden god. To worship him, to follow him, to serve his cause, became the overmastering obsession, the irresistible impulse which tore men from the joys and comforts of their home, from the love of parents, wives, and children, from the ambitions of worldly careers, from the delight of freedom, wealth, and sensual indulgence, and induced them to accept hunger, poverty, and pain, every extremity of severest discipline. If it asked them to sit and stare fixedly at the surface of one wall for years and years, they did it; to be immured in some small hole in a rock, depending for each drop of water on the charity of passersby-numbers went there of their own accord; to let their living flesh be burned to death—they lit the flames with their own hands. What did the anguish matter, the privations? Was there not Buddhahood beyond? Had

the Exalted One not promised heaven, the extinction of all suffering, unclouded bliss enduring ages after the span of earthly life?

Therefore thousands enlisted in the Buddhist army. Monasteries could not be founded fast enough to accommodate all these seekers of salvation. The copying of sacred scriptures, the acquisition of relics, the building of pagodas, swelled into a mania none but the wisest were able to withstand. In fact, this propaganda represents the greatest massed attempt at the storming of heaven that ever shook humanity out of its accustomed ways of life. In the snows of the Himalayas, under the palmtrees of the Tropics, in the plains of China, armies of yellow-robed monks were trained century after century to capture heaven here and now. In the sands of Egypt, on the shores of the Dead Sea, armies of white-robed Therapeutæ and Essenes flung the insistence of their vigils, fasts, and prayers towards the sky under the spell of the same immense illusion. For the length of its duration, for the extent of its influence, for the costliness of its material needs and the paucity of its ultimate results, it can only be compared to that far less beautiful but equally enthusiastic passion for the conquest of the earth which has obsessed Europe since the discovery of the New World, and which recently, on grounds of expediency rather than of historical accuracy, has been labelled militarism, more specifically Prussian militarism. Its most powerful patron-saints, however, are Nelson and Napoleon, who from their respective columns in Trafalgar Square and the Place Vendôme seem to be on a perpetual look-out for fresh portions of the globe to conquer. The earth-storming obsession might therefore fitly be called Nelsonism or Napoleonism.

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Like Buddhism of old, it tears men from everything they naturally hold dear, subjects their minds to the severest discipline, their bodies to every conceivable hardship, hunger, thirst, woundings, mainings, death; confuses their feelings, controls their actions, and holds out in exchange nothing but specious promises of glory. Yet, dazzled by its watchword "Victory," as converts to Buddhism were dazzled by the word "Salvation," millions flung themselves into the vortex of this new delusion, themselves and their luckless children too. Also, just as Buddhism made its gods ever bigger, its bells ever heavier, its monks ever more numerous, its claims on the laity ever more pressing, so Napoleonism makes its ships ever bigger, its guns ever heavier, its forces ever more numerous, its exactions from the civilians ever more pressing. Both are wholly parasitical, the army of the would-be conquerors of heaven as well as that of the would-be conquerors of earth. They create nothing: no food, no clothes, no tools, no articles of exchange. Yet they must be fed, housed, and equipped for their designs on gods and men. So the monks go round with the begging-bowl; the soldiers, though only by proxy of the State, with demand-notes for compulsory contributions to taxes and war-loans. And as long as the community sees in monk or soldier the type it admires, believes that he represents an infallible insurance, the one against heavenly, the other against human wrath, the alms-bowl gets filled and the war-loans taken up. However, the moment this belief fails, the institution it supported falls to the ground. And sooner or later that moment is bound to come, for not only do the facts contradicting the popular faith steadily accumulate, but it gradually appears

that the glittering promises which allured the multitude cannot be fulfilled—worse even, that what they held out as so certain of attainment has been driven further off than ever by the very means intended to achieve it. This ever is the result of a desire allowed to develop beyond all balance and reason, encouraged to distend into an uncontrollable obsession. It defeats itself, produces numbness and paralysis, making fulfilment an absolute impossibility.

The monks who promised the infinitude of heaven grew incapable of developing even their own finite mentality, of ministering to the simplest spiritual needs of mortals, and the conquerors of half the globe have degenerated at one end into a mass of paupers deprived of all ownership in the fresh air and soil of their own country, at the other into a clique of plutocrats drawing enormous wealth from gold-mines in the Polar Regions, plantations in the Tropics, oil-wells, tin-fields, ore deposits everywhere, but owning nothing beyond the burden and boredom of a vulgar luxury void of all inner meaning, wrenched away from all connection with the real values of this world.

The truth is, neither heaven nor earth can be taken by violence. They refuse themselves to those who snatch at them with the greedy haste of an uncontrolled desire. Only where all the tasks they set are faithfully performed, all their commands obeyed with unselfish devotion, where they are wooed humbly and tenderly through the long faithfulness of years, will they reveal the glorious wonders of their gifts, and allow themselves for brief and blessed moments to be owned, because reverenced and understood.

This belief, then, that a violently concentrated effort

of the will can produce results which only fall to the prolonged exercise of humility and patience is a complete delusion. But while it lasts—and it can last a long time, for mankind is always readier to be deceived than to be enlightened—the prize it holds out to its followers is so great it kindles intense fervour of enthusiasm. It is a power, a triumphal procession, with banners flying, joybells ringing, masses cheering along its route, its votaries the envied heroes of the hour.

The delusion of the conquest of heaven had at least the merit of marking this route with beautiful monasteries, golden pagodas, kindly human beings, not by smoking ruins, trampled harvests, battered corpses, and a trail of thorns and brambles for many famished years to come. Also it was singularly whole-hearted and sincere. No vendor of fire-arms and fire-water, no prospecting speculator, no political agent, no commander of gun-boats lurked behind the missionaries coming and going between India and China. No advertisements of Birmingham and New England goods crept into the flyleaf of their sacred writings. They were genuine in their devotion to the great Buddha, who in the craving for physical existence and all it implies of lust for wealth, dominion, pleasure, had found the source of the suffering from which he came to set the world free. The only material objects these poor monks valued were their holy scriptures, their begging-bowl, their pilgrim staff, images, relics.

For these the demand was endless. They evidently answered a need of the times—or a fashion. Real needs can as a rule be satisfied more profitably and lastingly by developing the resources of one's own heart and home. Particularly in a country which, like China had for

centuries been spiritually as well as economically more than self-sufficing, this craving for a foreign religious inspiration was not particularly healthy, all the less so since Buddhism, notwithstanding its dreamy beauty, is in almost every way inferior to the honest wisdom and the lofty ethics of the ancient Chinese sages. In practical life these, indeed, are not likely ever to be surpassed. To forsake them for Buddhism was very much like giving up pure well water for the specious charms of alcohol. But then the great spread of Buddhism in China occurred at a time of political confusion, fell into the distressful period of the Three Kingdoms and of the division into North and South, when the clatter of arms confused people's minds and the control of public affairs had fallen into hands so incompetent or so ignoble, honest men were fain to turn their back on them and seek some place of refuge where they could find the comfort of oblivion, the peace of renunciation. To them Buddha's message of the eightfold path, which if followed faithfully would never fail to bring deliverance from all the tribulations of this life, all the sorrows of rebirth, came like the clarioncall of dawn after the anguish of a sleepless night. True, a similar but better and less spectacular way had been pointed out by the old sages, but the mental torpor of the period required the stimulant of something startling and novel; the world-old iteration of ancestral wisdom merely sent it to sleep. Wherefore, when into the homely peace of loving ministrations to the spirits of the dead, into the dignified calm of the old-established, unadorned worship of heaven, Buddhism broke with its endless litanies, its millions of lamps, processions, lotos flowers, wonder-working sutras, its monks and its miracles, its

devas and demons, its heavens and hells, it thrilled the multitudes as with the joy of a magnificent discovery, set their imagination on fire, drew thousands into the glamour of its amazing promises as moths are sucked into the brightness of a flame.

It is part of the psychology of the masses that promises exercise a far greater power of attraction over them than performance. The reason being that promises unchecked by practical considerations need impose no limits but the very elastic ones of human credulity to the splendour of the glories wherewith they dazzle the public. Performance, on the contrary, knocking up everywhere against the stubborn hardness of realities, is necessarily a slow, laborious, and imperfect business, demanding from all patience and perseverance, with the courage to face and the intelligence to overcome difficulties.

But courage and intelligence are rare qualities, especially in combination, and the times were out of joint, ready to appease their hunger for certainties, stability, and happiness with faith in promises, since nothing more substantial seemed to be forthcoming.

And the promises of this fresh road to heaven were framed on such a lavish scale, guaranteed nothing less than salvation from the sins and evils of this world, beatific happiness as well in the tangible to-day as in the ghostly to-morrow beyond the grave, and all through no greater effort than was implied by either joining a brotherhood or building a monastery or helping to support one. Was it not written: "Whosoever piously gives a little water shall receive return like the great sea"?

This, of course, went far beyond what Cakyamuni had taught, or rather, in truth and honesty, it fell immeasur-

ably below his austere promise of salvation, which he limited to this:

He who, choosing the Middle Path between self-indulgence and asceticism, so empties his heart of hatred, ignorance, and craving for continued individual existence that all his emotions are swayed by tender love of the whole wide world, all his desires merged in one fervent aspiration towards the sublime wisdom of Buddhahood; whose body is so saturated with the power of thought, his blood flows in the calm silence of one unalterable purpose, closed to the distractions of temptation—such an one, having realized the truths, traversed the path, broken the bonds, ended the intoxications, shed the hindrances, has definitely reached the end of suffering, and rests in the goal of Buddhist yearning, in the supreme joy, the home of peace, in abiding, ineffable, transcendent, imperishable bliss.

K'ung-fu-tsze made no such promises. His ideal was not the holy man, as it was Buddha's, but the heroic; and to this heroic type, this aristocrat in the oldest and best sense of the term, he held out no hope of personal happiness, no reward of everlasting beatitude to bribe him into the paths of virtue. Fearlessly he even admitted it might lead him into danger, persecution, and death. Yet he urged him to remain true to it, loyal to the highest principles, simply because it was right, because in no other manner could he achieve man's real destiny and embody in his life the harmonious fulfilment of the will and purposes of Heaven. His appeal, though directed to all, could be fully understood only by the noble, the courageous, the self-sacrificing.

Buddha's exhortation to sinlessness did not maintain

quite so pure a standard of motives, for it pressed the selfish hope of personal reward into its service.

But he also did not minimize, if anything he rather exaggerated, the need for strenuous individual exertion and unremitting vigilance to attain the beatitude he promised. The degrading taint of vicariousness formed no part of his doctrine.

However, as it spread and generated an immense proselytizing activity, it was found that strenuous and unremitting personal exertion did not appeal to the multitude for long. Yet without the continued support of the multitude the monks would perish from starvation. Therefore the gospel they brought had to be commercialized into a marketable article for which the demand would be large and lasting. Accordingly, Buddha's philosophy of pessimism and salvation by renouncing the will to live was tricked out with all the fantastic fairyland optimism so dear to the majority. The "Nivanaya," the Little Vehicle, containing the oldest of the sacred texts transmitted mainly for the redemption of the holy, was supplemented by the "Mahayana," the Big Vehicle, a collection of later writings for the redemption of all. To the Buddha, too remote, too inaccessible on the luminous heights of his beatific meditation, were added a number of Lohans and Boddhisattvas, as it were his vicegerents on earth, enlightened ones hesitating on the threshold of Buddhahood in order actively to help suffering humanity. The etherialized beatitude of the Nirvana state of mind took on itself the vivid shapes and colours of a regular paradise which rewarded the faithful in the tangible way they could appreciate, with exquisite sweetness of scents and sounds, heavenly blueness of lotos

flowers, with forests of gem trees, their roots of beryl, their trunks of agate, their branches of coral, their leaves of emeralds, their fruit of diamonds: with showers of sandalwood powder and jewelled blossoms dropping softly between nets of pearls and ropes of gold on to lazuli floors and level banks of crystal rivers flowing with the deep melodiousness of the imperishable words: "Peace, compassion, love, attainment." The austere road walked by the great Buddha, proving too hard for the lesser ones who tried to follow, was lit up with magic splendour, brightened with flowers, made pleasant with processions, peopled with a host of benign divinities-laughing Gods of Plenty, gentle Goddesses of Mercy-listening to the prayers of men. And when the believer stumbled or was struggling against calamity, all these beautiful gleaming hands were stretched out towards him to help him. Even if he had been guilty of many crimes, let him but call a holy teacher of the Law to his deathbed, lift his folded hands and devoutly, with uninterrupted voice, utter and repeat ten times "Adoration to Buddha Amitayus," then dying he would see a golden lotos flower like the disk of the sun blossom before his eyes, and in a moment he would be born in the World of Highest Happiness And that nothing should be wanting to the vulgar man's idea of bliss, horrible hells were added, to whose lakes of boiling oil, to the talons of whose demons, he could have the supreme satisfaction of seeing his enemies consigned.

By these and similar methods Buddha's noble truth was degraded into a popular lie, into a kind of salvation while you wait. It was this form of Buddhism, overlaid with nearly six centuries of accretions and vulgarizations,

which won its way into China, as it was the Christianity of creeds and priests and miracles which conquered Europe, not the Christianity of Galilee, which has not been accepted to this day. Coming at a time of political and mental instability acting and reacting on each other, the success of this religion of wonder-working supernaturalism was phenomenal, though fortunately it only shook, never undermined, the position of the native religion of naturalism, of reverence for the great laws and harmonies swaying Heaven, Earth, and Man. But it blew over the whole country with the hot breath of an Indian summer. Hundreds of lavishly decorated temples, thousands of fantastically shaped dagobas, quantities of gigantic bells, of golden images, ten, twenty, sixty cubits high, sprang out of the soil with the speed, the size, the exuberance of a teeming tropical vegetation. Miracle-working bones and teeth were paraded through the streets in gorgeous processions and accorded more than imperial honours, to the intense disgust of the wise, who remained faithful to the sober sanity of Confucianism. Indian missionaries were welcomed and sumptuously entertained at public expense. Ardent Chinese converts, received into the bosom of the blessed fold, faced the burning winds and bone-strewn wastes of the moving sands, of the deserts of heaped stones, crossed stormy seas and snowbound mountains, and, undaunted by brigands, hunger, or disease, tramped for thousands of miles over unknown roads through unknown lands, amidst people speaking an unknown language. And all to see the footprints left by the Excellent One in the country of his birth, to offer the homage of their adoration at the shrines in the Holy Land of Buddha, and to study,

gather, and translate there as many copies of the sacred codes as possible.

This is some of the material they collected:

"Thou and all beings besides ought to make it thy only aim with concentrated thought to get a perception of the western quarter. Thou shouldst sit down properly, looking in the western direction, and prepare thy mind for a close meditation on the sun . . . and gaze upon it when it is about to set and looks like a suspended drum. After thou hast thus seen the sun, let that image remain clear and fixed, whether thine eyes be shut or open. This is the first Meditation. Next thou shouldst form the perception of water, gaze on the water clear and pure, and let this image also remain clear and fixed. . . . Then form the perception of ice. As thou seest the ice shining and transparent, thou shouldst imagine the appearance of lapis lazuli. After that has been done, thou wilt see the ground consisting of lapis lazuli, transparent and shining. . . . Beneath it there will be seen a golden banner with the seven jewels supporting the ground. It extends to the eight points of the compass. Every side of the eight quarters consists of one hundred jewels, every jewel has one thousand rays, every ray has eightyfour thousand colours, which when reflected in the ground of lapis lazuli look like a thousand millions of suns. . . . Lodged high up in the open sky, these rays form a tower of rays, whose stories and galleries are ten millions in number and built of one hundred jewels. Both sides of the tower have each one hundred million flowery banners decked with numberless musical instruments. Eight kinds of cool breezes proceed from the brilliant rays. . . . Such is the perception of the water which is the second Meditation. . . .

"When the perception of the Buddha country has been gained thou shouldst next meditate on the jewel-trees. Each tree is covered by seven sets of nets, and between one set and another there are five hundred billion palaces built of excellent flowers. All heavenly children live there quite naturally; every child has a garland of five hundred billions of precious gems. . . . On meditating on the trees, trunks, branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits, let them all be distinct and clear. This is the fourth Meditation."

And so on down to thirteen Meditations, which if of the right—not the heretical—kind would surely free the believer "from the sins by which he was bound to births and deaths during eighty millions of cycles."

To compare such exuberant fantasies with a page out of the old Chinese Classics is like stepping from the close atmosphere of a hot-house crammed with highly coloured, heavily scented exotics, of use only for adornment, out again into the fresh air of the fields, where the mighty harvests grow which nourish life.

But the exotic was all the fashion. Even an emperor, once clear-sighted, energetic, ambitious to found a lasting dynasty, helplessly succumbed to the general intoxication. The golden image of Buddha which the Han Emperor Ming had once seen floating vast and radiant over the imperial palace became to him the overmastering reality, the divine effulgence that was clearer than the sun, the ground that was firmer than the earth. Massive, immovable, impelling, it blotted out everything with the haunting silence of its presence, the profound calm of its expression, the infinite peace of its aloofness from the pitfalls and trammels of destiny. The purple

shadow of its gold dulled the lustre of jewelled sceptres of red lacquer and green jade, blunted the glitter on sharp edges of bright steel, blurred decrees proudly signed by the vermilion pencil with the burden of its warning:

"All life is suffering;
All desire is delusion.

There is no salvation outside the Law."

And by obedience to that Law it would in time be possible to grow just like the great Buddha, massive, immovable, imperturbable, enthroned on lotos flowers above pain, above fate, above death. What if this business of governing were but a snare to lure men away from the only thing that mattered, the salvation of their soul? Had not royal luxury been called a creeper-plant bearing naught but poisonous fruit? Was it wise for a few more years of worldly power to lose zons and zons of glory in the jewelled heaven of the Buddha country? And there was so much hollowness, trouble, and disappointment in that earthly glory which once had seemed so wonderful, so cruelly desirable. Some terrible sins had been committed to obtain it, sins for which the monks said the law of cause and effect had prepared fiery circles of yet more terrible hells. So what could a poor distracted emperor do but fling aside sceptres, spears, and perilous dragon-robes, shave his head, and seek safety in the humble yellow of a monk, freed from the distractions of worldly cares, all his hours henceforth dedicated to the accumulating of merit in the service of the Exalted One?

It now appeared how wise K'ung-fu-tsze had been when he would not allow attention to be concentrated on

prodigies and supernatural beings. He knew how easily interest in these matters turns to superstition and indiscriminate surrender to the sway of the unscrupulous, the magic or the newsmongers who under pretence of enlightening the people only intensify its ignorance. Of course, wherever Buddhism remained a religion of compassion, peace, and personal holiness, unspoilt by faith in a paradise purchasable with gold lavished on a rapacious Church, it exercised a soothing, sweetening, wholly beneficial influence, over the sensitive natures of artists and poets—even a supremely inspiring influence. Indeed, all monasticism, when kept within reasonable bounds, answering as it does to a genuine need of many beautiful minds, represents a distinct power for good. To have abolished it root and branch, as was done in Protestant countries and in modern France, was a grave mistake. For it obliterated that ideal of the saintly man which a pure monasticism is so well fitted to keep alive in popular consciousness, and allowed it almost everywhere to be superseded by that of the successful man, an ideal so dangerously low, no nation can worship it for long without coming to far more serious grief than any even a debased monkhood could inflict upon it.

The best of these Buddhist monasteries, with their gleaming statues and bright-coloured paintings, their sonorous bells, their open services with fragrance of incense, flowers, and bloodless offerings; their richly decorated temples, their peaceful courtyards, their hospitable guest-chambers, scattered all over the country—on wooded hill-tops, in the heart of populous suburbs, on the edge of humble villages—must have poured forth a constant stream of joy and comfort to the afflicted and

the poor. Possibly it is just this pusillanimous craving for joy and comfort which encourages superstition and checks the progress of truth far more effectually and frequently than direct antagonism. But till there have been many more generations of strong, secure, happy, and thoroughly well educated men and women than fate seems willing to concede, superstitions, either religious or political, social or economic, according to the main tendency of the age, will always succeed infinitely better than truth.

There certainly was one country to which Buddhism came as a new and shining truth—the truth that the heart of the Divine is light and love and tenderness, not the fierce coil of devilry which the natives, crushed by the weight of their gigantic mountains, mostly imagined it to be.

That country was Tibet.

To those wild regions the faith in Buddha, when first introduced, brought nothing but sweetness and beauty. And all that sweetness and beauty lay in the soft hands of a Chinese and of an Indian princess. They were both married to Srong Tsan Gampo, king of most of the tribes there. An able man and an ambitious, eager to mould his wild hillsmen into a nation with temples, gods, and books, such as were in use among his civilized neighbours. He was one of the many attracted by the magnetism of Tai Tsung, the great T'ang Emperor. The impact between the two countries was at first unfriendly, but war turned to peace and friendship, as wars not pushed to extremes will do, and in 641 A.D. a Chinese princess was given him in marriage.

She was called Wen Tcheng.

Lhasa, the capital to which she came, had only just been built, and must have had all the roughness, the unmitigated crudeness, of the glaringly new which has not yet mellowed into its own niche in time and space. One can picture the long caravan of outriders, litters, carriages, beasts of burden heavily weighted, the escort strongly armed, winding their way up to the elevated plain where the new city, the new castle, the new life awaited the young bride; and one wonders what she thought in her swaying palanquin, the fresh air of unknown mountains blowing through the broidered curtains, all the sights and sounds borne in on her strange, uncouth, and hundreds of dangerous and difficult miles between her and the beautiful palace that had sheltered her till now.

She brought with her vermilion lacquered boxes full of soft silks and embroideries, and ebony caskets full of jewels of carved jade, of golden filigree inlaid with coral, turquoises, and pearls. And she brought a great shining Buddha, destined to draw the hearts of the people into his radiance out of the darkness of their fears. The exquisite manners of one trained to much self-effacement, reverence, and obedience were all about her, with the gentle voice and the musical inflexions of cultured Chinese speech. Also behind that gentle voice she brought the power of much silence. Which was well, for not all her thoughts could safely have been uttered.

In this silence, which she never broke, grew up that ache of home-sickness which sooner or later befalls all women who marry into a foreign country away from their own kith and kin. It gave a wondrous depth to her dark eyes and a strange aloofness to her pensive smile. Often the cold was overwhelming. Tumultuous hurri-

canes shook earth and sky, and, icy with the breath of glaciers, howled against her painted windows in the palace fort above the town. Behind sheets of stinging hail, of thick-flaked snow, mountains reared up from the frozen plain, black, precipitous, with the height and weight of dungeon walls. Then she would gather her little son close to her heart, and fondle him and coo to him, but the expression of an alien race met her in his astonished eyes, and the accents of an alien speech spoke to her from the lips of her own child.

Or she would seek the help of the great Buddha, who from long ago knew all her needs. But on those cruel days even he seemed closed and hard and withdrawn into himself. The gold of his stiff robes, of his silent face, of his motionless hands fluttered and failed in that dark and unwarmed temple like the light of a small candle inside the gloom of dripping caves, and shadows hung bleak and icy in his temple, like mildewed shrouds out of crumbling sepulchres. But there were other days, spring days, when from furthest distances of space the gods came down seeking man's companionship, and her blood flowed warm and buoyant as though it drove sparkling sunbeams through her veins. Then the grave Buddha would grow radiant and vast, magnificent like the dawn of paradise half-breaking above the bowl of gentians she had brought him, gentians blue as the sky where it is bluest, lovely as a mountain-lake sapphire in the greenness of great hills. On those days she would give largely to the poor-clothes and food and all the wealth of her compassion. And they gave her their worship, dumb and humble like that of animals unused to gentle handling.

Sometimes in the gloaming, as they passed by beneath her casement, they could hear the sound of her lute, soft and wistful as the twilight music lonely women sing unto themselves dreaming of the one who never can be born.

Then they would linger awhile and listen, and when the last note had melted away into the darkness they would go home, feeling sure no evil spirits could have any power that night.

The memory of her gentle presence has not yet died out of their gratitude and her sweet white face, now wholly deified, still looks down on the people that kneel before her, still expecting from her hands largesse and compassion.

The precious seed these hands had helped to sow took such deep root, it became a vital part of that vigorous soil. Once or twice there came a reaction, a revolt of all the latent native ignorance against the new religion. There occurred some burnings of books, some destroying of temples, some slayings and drivings into exile. But, as mostly happens in such cases, the persecutors after a while discovered they could not do without the thing they had attacked.

Buddhism filtered back, but scarred from all those unjust burnings, much of its energy driven outwards to make the hard, protective crust needful in case of possible future attacks. To that extent its inner force was diminished, enfeebled against the insidious infection of the grossness and puerility of aboriginal beliefs. The result was a Buddhism stiffened into a powerful hierarchy, but allowing the pure doctrine of the world-honoured One to be smothered by a dense jungle of native superstitions.

To this Buddhism, known as Lamaism, Kublai Khan made the road smooth and wide into China. Not for the benefit of China. But during all the years of power of the Yuan dynasty it remained a dominating influence in Peking. Now it lingers there only in a few disjointed remnants. At least, that is the impression its neglected temples convey—but of course impressions can mislead.

Indeed, the largest Lama temple, though requiring much repair, shows indubitable signs of continued vitality. The services there have all the regularity and orderliness of actions whereof the purpose still commands unquestioning belief; the number of boys dedicated to the monastic life seems to show no falling off—happy, well fed boys they look, picturesque in the wide folds of their purplish-red or deep orange-coloured cloaks. Incense glows in beautiful old cloisonné bowls; offerings of flowers, cakes, and fruit are set forth upon the altars with loving care.

But in the Temple of the White Pagoda the altars are quite empty, the priests gone, and the worshippers. There are no candles, no incense-sticks, no offerings, no prayers; the red lacquer peels off, and the gilding. Crows settle their loves and their disputes round the lofty stupa; trees shoot up between the slabs of polished marble which once made it a glittering sepulchre for the two thousand clay models of pagodas, the twenty precious pearls, the five sacred manuscripts believed to protect the neighbourhood from evil, and which actually did lure strong men away from active life to become their consecrated priests—secured rich endowments from long lines of emperors and fervent worship from many generations

of believers. Yet who cares about them now? So much is all power a matter of faith.

In what is left of the sacred courtyards, fairs are held to supply the household wants of common folk—indestructible in their extreme humility—brooms, combs, scissors, spoons, brushes, peanuts heaped up in little piles, the frailest of toys, the cheapest of glass jewellery, displayed round the pedestals on which huge marble tortoises bear the weight of memorial tablets, beautifully carved with an inscription nobody now troubles to decipher.

And the great Buddha, utterly forgotten by the living, sits in mournful state with his eighteen Lohans, dead over two thousand years; gazes into the cobwebby silence, as if waiting for an echo of all the fervour of faith and prayer that once poured itself out before him here, as if wondering at all the dust and dimness and oblivion that is gathering around him now.

At least he still has the shelter of a roof. Even that has failed the luckless saints of the Five Pagoda Temple, and the sky they were supposed to be able to influence sends down its indifferent frosts and rains and storms of hail and snow to break and fritter them away, till scarcely anything is left of them beyond their wooden skeletons holding up gaunt arms in dumb reproach against that pitiless heaven which would not save them in their peril.

Only the five pagodas which give the temple its name are still standing on a massive substructure, its sides decorated with rows upon rows of meditating Buddhas. The whole is fairly intact, though the golden statuettes have vanished for the sake of which the sanctuary was built. They were gifts from India to the Emperor Yung

Lo, at a time when the court of Peking was almost as great a magnet for Asiatic princes as the court of St. James's is now. From the hot plains of India they came, from the frozen steppes of Mongolia, from the mountains of Tibet. To accommodate Tibetan lamas and Mongolian nobles, Khang Si, the great Manchu Emperor, constructed the Yellow Temple, a mile or two outside the northern walls of Peking. Chien Lung the Magnificent added the wonderful marble stupa, as a memorial to a Grand Lama who died here in 1779.

Now, from memorial and temple, from the whole complex of what must have been imposing buildings designed and fit for living Buddhas and other distinguished guests, from the very idea of such lavish hospitality on the one hand, such loyal homage on the other, the quickening impulse has passed away.

Ruin and decay are in complete possession, the accusing signs of wanton external violence painfully evident, but more marked still, and so much deadlier in their effect, the signs of increasing weakness from within. few repairs, if only undertaken in time, could save so much. Yet no one troubles to carry them out. With fatalistic ineptitude, the remaining monks, doubly smitten with poverty of purse and mind, watch the beautiful structure dissolving before their eyes—eyes dulled from having for the last two decades gazed on so many cataclysms, so many frightful happenings. Now the whole seems doomed: the delicate carving on the marble dagoba brutally mutilated, its steps falling asunder; the red lacquered pillars of the eastern shrine yielding; great chunks of the magnificently carved roof, with all the lustrous glitter of its tiles, crashed into weeds and brambles, helpless, hopeless, beyond repair by anything but an immense devotion. And that seems even more desolate than the temples it once erected with such splendour and in such profusion.

For who holds it now, the Buddha faith which also is the Christ faith in holiness and charity, maintains it with that passionate conviction which can move mountains, but without which not the least small grain of the surely gathering and all-obliterating dust can so much as be kept at bay? Have not the leading nations of the world centred their faith on Dreadnoughts and Invincible Armadas, and is their one supreme conviction not the exploitation, the rough conquest, of this earth in which ancient piety saw nothing but the threshold to the great Beyond?

Yet this latter-day faith too, this conviction of the present hour, shall pass away, and when on some tomorrow it will lie worn out and exhausted by its restless search for Dead Sea fruit, fate will write Sic transit gloria mundi across the mighty Dreadnoughts as surely as to-day it is writing these four sad words across the beautiful temples crumbling to mounds of meaningless stones in the great sun-steeped plain around Peking,

CHAPTER VII

Museums are the cemeteries of beautiful things. The glass cases through which we peer at them—their coffins.

The things which daily use keeps living, daily demand indefinitely multiplied, do not get into museums; only fragments out of worlds submerged beneath the rising tide of a present wherein they have no place or part; traces left by the hands of men lost in a constantly increasing distance; relics dropped out of the fading of what grows ever more unintelligible, mysterious, and remote.

Therefore we should walk through museums with the reverence due to all that has passed out of the movement we call life into the immobility which we call death. And we should look upon these buried treasures with a sense of mourning for what was exquisite in life and whose going grips our heart with the sharp pang of an irreparable loss.

All the beautiful things of China are drifting into museums: the Dragon Throne on which mighty emperors sat in state, the golden gods to whom they prayed in all humility, the weapons of their hours of peril, the trinkets of their hours of peace. Bronzes so massive they seem cast for all eternity, sacrificial vessels whereon the sodden meat or the unhusked rice was offered to ancestral spirits, libation-cups from which the dark-coloured liquor was

poured in honour of immortal presences—the altars for which they were fashioned, the temples wherein they were placed, the faith by which they were needed, having crumbled away, life felt no further use for them, embalmed them into curios, classified them in catalogues, coffined them in hermetically sealed glass cases. Bowls, vases, platters, perfume-boxes of cloisonné with blues of lazuli, greens of malachite and jasper, worked into patterns ranging from the antique and austere thunder-scroll to the later and softer arabesques of flowers, interlacings of plum-blossom, undulations of waves and clouds and windswept reeds, of coils of great dragons in endless pursuit of the night-shimmering pearl; flights of storks and ducks and bats; miniature pleasure-gardens with grapes of amethyst, pomegranates of coral, peach-trees of rosequartz; toy rockeries of agate, chrysoprase, and turmaline; seals of emperors and high officials carved out of all manner of precious stones; snuff-bottles of crystal, jade, and ivory; jewelled mirrors, painted fans, intricate embroideriesthe palatial luxury which required all these lovely trifles to amuse and decorate its leisure, having been exiled to poverty and feebleness, pawned them, sold them, betraved them into alien hands. Torn from the semi-sacred seclusion of dainty alcoves hidden as something very precious within the maze and the mystery of innermost apartments, damaged, looted, exposed to the ignorant stare of the vulgar, tossed about between dishonest dealers and greedy collectors, what could these orphans of a vanished splendour do but die, glad to come to some sort of rest in the chilly silence of museums? And one fancies that when the doors are closed against all visitors and only a sleepy custodian or two go the round of the dim rooms, whispers

pass from case to case, and there occurs a ghostly resurrection of the glories of all the dazzling hours to which these beautiful remnants once added the lustre of their loveliness. Strange reflections rise up from the depths of looking-glasses, flit across the tarnished surface that once mirrored such seductive smiles. Painted fans begin to stir as if waved by scented hands. The original owners leave the dust of their distant tombs and array themselves once more in the magnificence of their staterobes, hanging there forgotten in the dark on lifeless pegs. They are superb, those robes, so resplendent they might well draw idle spirits back to them out of the grave. Fashioned of the heaviest brocades, made yet more gorgeous by the most perfect needlework, the flowers embossed with seed-pearls, the leaves encrusted with threads of silver, they are still further embellished with buttons of wrought gold and with elaborate interlacings of strings of shell-pink coral or translucent ivory. Clearly they belong to the spacious days when kingship had faith in itself, when it moved about in the brightness of the sunshine gorgeous, generous, superb, dazzling to the multitude, a rallying-point for their allegiance, a symbol of justice, strength, stability; when there was no need for it to beg for crumbs of popularity at the beds of hospitals or the stalls of charity bazaars, nor to crawl and fawn along the underground tunnellings of parliamentary lobbies, of newspaper offices, of the back parlours of cosmopolitan money-lenders. Its magnificent ceremonial robes could only be worn at a court of sovereigns in whom the people revered power raised far above the petty cunning of their own temptations; authority set up on high by the incorruptible mandate of Heaven, not by the votes

of the cumulative imbecility of popular majorities—majorities mostly helpless in the grip of a secret gang which manipulates them at its pleasure, and which delights in discrowning and dragging down, since this is easier and more gratifying to its vindictive vanity than the slow and laborious process of levelling upwards.

Excited by the cry of liberty, which they have not yet discovered can be raised by those who believe in it only for themselves and to further their own corrupt designs; urged by the desire for efficient administration, and still blissfully unaware of the disheartening fact that parliaments and elected cabinets can and do fail in that respect just as often and egregiously as autocracies, the Chinese rushed into revolution; which revolution has been acclaimed by many as a great success. Perhaps it is, only most assuredly not as regards the art of dressing, for its first care seems to have been to make cheap, ill-fitting, illbecoming clothes the universal fashion. For some occult reason these were felt to be more in keeping with the change from an Emperor, Son of Heaven, to a President mainly the son of American dollars. Liberty, equality, fraternity have not yet lost that taste for greasy caps and drab garments they showed when they first raised their heads out of the blood and mire in which they were born.

The gorgeous robes of brocade and embroideries, with flowers embossed in seed-pearls, buttons of wrought gold, interlacings of ropes of shell-pink coral or translucent ivory, had suddenly grown too bright, too beautiful. They were relegated to a museum, hung up there limp and empty as carnival costumes in the midst of the ashes of Lent—relics.

In the same room are also exhibited presents offered to the Manchus by the Bourbons, whose splendour was the first to be victimized by that process of levelling down which was to bring so much happiness to the world, and which only brought so much additional ugliness. Among those gifts is a gun which the Jesuit missionaries brought from the France of Louis XV to the China of Ch'ien Lung; Jesuits characteristically enough being from the first associated in Peking with the introducing and making of fire-arms, thus from the outset typifying in the spirit of what Christianity Western Europe meant to deal with the Far East. This gun is decorated with charming scrolls of chiselling, and though its purpose is destruction it is still an object of some beauty. Only as the impulse towards destruction and dominion grew bigger, stronger beyond all proportion, fiercely intolerant of every other impulse, the last vestige of ornamentation fell away and the idea of beauty was completely eliminated. Efficiency became the only aim, efficiency in the means for making Napoleonism supreme, for carrying out the prevalent obsession of the conquest of the earth, still only in its beginnings under the monarch who sent this specimen of European ingenuity to China. There it was a novelty and a surprise. In other respects, however, there is a certain amount of kinship in the art of the Manchu and the Bourbon courts-kinship of originating circumstances, kinship of the motives it expressed and served. It is an art evolved by jewellers and craftsmen to please the fastidious elegance of wealthy patrons; an art of alcoves, of beautiful favourites, of graceful luxury and irresponsible leisure; distinctly subservient to the canons of Jesuit taste. It tends to the loading of precious gems, of costly jewels, on surfaces already polished, chiselled, and enamelled beyond the point of artistic perfection, and its decorative schemes often suffer from an overabundance of ideas gathered and heaped up from the wealth of all preceding ages by an age lacking an original inspiration of its own, because it no longer possessed the strength that carries into a large future. When power lavishes so much attention on bric-à-brac, the day of its dissolution is never very far distant.

To turn from these glittering trifles to the bowls and vases of exquisitely shaped and coloured pottery of an earlier period is like turning from mere iridescent bubbles to something profound, ultimate, enduring. There almost is a note of eternity in these amber or hyacinth tinted porcelains, the eternity of things supremely beautiful, with no flaw of texture to break the harmony of their perfection, no fault of line to mar the music of their rhythm. And there are vases of dreamy violets and lavenders and bleu flambé shown on the palest sky-blue silk, jars of pure pistachio green and others of a red as rich as blood. Their beauty has the simplicity and directness of expression which belongs to the highest art of every age.

These are more than relics. They are what no change of thought or mode of life can displace from their serene completeness; that to which no fresh experience can add anything, from which no altered outlook can take anything away.

To imagine that a people who could produce such loveliness was a race of pedants fossilized in meaningless ceremonies, in empty phrases, is to show considerable ignorance of the conditions governing creative art. No one can succeed in it who is not gifted with a keen perception for

the harmonies of nature, with a warm, impulsive, generous, yet tenacious and courageous temperament, infinitely sensitive to the manifold vibrations which weave the everchanging veil of appearances. And in the outward circumstances of his life the creative artist needs a certain measure of security from want and so large a degree of personal and intellectual freedom as would make a pedant tremble for the continued existence of society.

Except under the short-lived tyranny of Shi Huang Ti. these essential conditions existed in China throughout a far longer period and to a fuller extent than in any other country. Chinese art has therefore been the most vigorous and abundant of the world. Provided the very serious dangers threatening from the growing power of modern industrialism can be weathered, it might even experience a real renaissance, a great period of revival, develop into a shining example to those who realize that mass production by machinery in enormous factories, dominated by a spirit of unscrupulous competition, has grown into such a mania, such a danger to the health and happiness of mankind, it needs to be counterbalanced by a resurrection of the handicrafts of guilds or family groups, by their drastic reintroduction into all those industries where they yield better results than machine manufacture. Nothing else provides so satisfactory an outlet for man's creative faculties. And without such an outlet content and harmonious development are absolutely impossible. Its ruthless, thoughtless suppression has already used up whole races and is daily reducing millions to an increasingly stagnant level of tired, shallow-brained, more than half-dehumanized slaves and slave-drivers, their personality numbed, their growth cramped, by the deadly

monotony, the unnatural conditions, of a gigantic soulless system which catches them from childhood and slowly grinds them down to mere cogs, helpless in the speed and motion of something huge and hard and totally incomprehensible. How different is the mental and moral education of handicrafts. It does not tear men, women. and children out of their home surroundings; it diversifies instead of destroying family life Mere mechanics it turns into artists—that is, into men to whom work is not a curse but a blessing, not an outside discipline to which they bow only under the lash of poverty but a vital activity answering an inner impulse, an instinctive need for self-expression. It leaves them eyes to see, hearts to feel, imaginations to exercise; trains them to steadfastness of purpose, to painstaking patience, to pride in good work, and all through their own will, not through the rules and regulations of managers and foremen. It makes them look for and find their main reward not in cash wages to be extracted from close-fisted companies but in the joy of creating something beautiful, something that will carry an embodiment of the worker's dreams and personality into the light of future generations long after the bubble of his separate existence has broken and dissolved.

And this increase of happiness and honesty in the worker is reflected in the product of his toil, which even where it shows flaws and imperfections escapes what is infinitely worse, that dreary uniformity void of all thought or emotion, that flat vulgarity so characteristic of the wholesale factory article. No factory, no machinery sped up to its utmost power of production by a system whose only gospel is a swift and abundant return on invested capital, could create so much enduring beauty as is con-

tained in the old porcelains and lacquers which the eclipse of Chinese political and economic independence has fossilized into exhibits of a museum. Infinite patience. tireless skill, went into their making, especially into that of the lacquers. On a carefully prepared foundation of wood the rich, bright substance was spread, smooth and scarlet as velvet, and gradually added to, till it grew with the slowness and steadfastness of geological strata, with the deliberateness of the oak which will not hurry because it feels within itself the strength to endure through long centuries. Instead of the nerve-destroying Yankee craze of working against time, the Chinese craftsman worked with time, and never hesitated to call in its quietly maturing help. There was no hastening to produce swift but perishable surface effects, none of the hustling that weakens the soundness and cohesion of tissues. And finally, when his tough material had settled into the solidity of stone, it was polished, worked on, carved into charming pictures of Chinese scenery: quivering bamboos, towering pinetrees, each minute needle traced with the skill and patience of nature, waters eddying round a tangle of tall reeds. rivers spanned by the bold leap of beautifully curved bridges: and human life, conceived not as the cunning conqueror of earth but as her ripest fruit and dearest child: a peasant tilling his little patch of soil, maidens weaving at the loom, a scholar poring over learned scrolls, a villager bearing bundles of firewood, in a small skiff a fisherman, and hovering over all this serenity of quiet labour, unbroken by the shriek of sirens, the clank of factory bells, two one-winged birds, poetic symbols of loyalty and love.

These lacquers are a feast of crimson, the enamels a

triumphant symphony of blue. Burnt into copper or brass in patterns outlined by thin metal wires, this cloisonné is the substance and the decoration of thrones and screens, of life-size cranes, of vases stately in their size and their ornateness. The blues in them range from palest turquoise to the deepest lazuli. None but a people living under a cloudless sky, near seas of richly fluctuating azures, could have obtained such a mastery over that loveliest of all the notes in the scale of colours, could ever have learnt to blend the whole gamut of its tones and semitones, its majors and minors, into such perfect harmonies. And when the sun shines down on these imperial treasures, drawing all their multiple vibrations to the surface, they seem to transcend themselves, to fuse their separate loveliness into one aura of incomparable blue.

They almost seem to long for the sumptuous life that called them into being and lavished the light of its allotted hours near them, making the court of Peking the most brilliant in the world. Now the light is spent and its art at rest in the cold sanctity of a museum. Perhaps its time had been fulfilled. Achievement in technical skill, in mellowness of colour, in elegance of line, could go no further. We must be thankful that the death-knell did not sound before perfection had been reached.

Many of these masterpieces date from the great times of Ch'ien Lung. It is fitting they should be exhibited in what was once his working palace. Something of his mighty presence lingers there still and radiantly perpetuates itself in the sheen of porcelains, lacquers, ivories, enamels, of all these wonderful things created under the inspiration of his splendour. They have carried the sound of his fame right round the globe. The countries

he subdued by his sword, taught to tremble before other conquerors, have forgotten him, but in the tinkle of fragile teacups, in the sonority of enamelled brasses, the name "Ch'ien Lung" still comes back to the lips of living men.

His was one of those rich, large minds born at rare and precious intervals to light up a whole epoch as stars kindle great tracts of gold in the gigantic night of infinite space. A poet, with the poet's breadth of vision, and a sovereign able to give these visions substance and form. With his strong creative hands he moulded Manchus and Chinese into armies of invincible soldiers, to render the frontiers of his dominions wide and strong; of artists and builders to make the face of the country beautiful with grandly planned and executed monuments; of craftsmen and merchants to enrich the people; of learned scholars to gather and compile in magnificent encyclopedias the ripe wisdom of the past.

Maybe he somewhat overstrained his subjects. It is the way of a genius to project the might of his inspiration far into the future, to gather up and spend in one magnificent display the life-blood of many more generations of men than his own.

Or maybe the lassitude which befell China shortly after his great presence had been taken from her was merely due to the fact that he immeasurably transcended the nations over whom he ruled, that the paths he traced for their energies to follow proved too steep, too difficult, without the guidance of his stimulating leadership. For the Chinese had not yet recovered for a sufficiently long time from the civil wars which ruined the Mings, nor from the humiliations of the Manchu conquest, to have accumulated that reserve of vital force which enables a people to carry forward on its own shoulders the mighty schemes conceived and initiated by the genius of great rulers. The Manchus were beginning to succumb to the enervating effects of their position of a privileged, idle, and exploiting class, which their military efficiency and the ambitions of their dynasty had won for them.

Yet, although Ch'ien Lung failed to strengthen the foundations of China's greatness, he gave her sixty years of splendour, glory, and prosperity, an achievement dazzling even in that brilliant eighteenth century, everywhere so rich in master-minds and in the production of artistic masterpieces. It took a personality as great as his adequately to fill the palaces of the Purple—the Forbidden—City; palaces so great and beautiful themselves they seem to call for mighty generations generously living in the joyfulness of a vital epoch.

In their main lines they were constructed for the Mongols. But the inspiration is Chinese. This fearless use of vast empty spaces to balance and set off to the full the stateliness, the rich colour-scheme of the buildings, this processional grouping and superb succession of gateways, courtyards, and pavilions, flow from that instinct for the Universal which is peculiarly characteristic of good Chinese art. Strongly marked in their paintings, where large empty spaces are often deliberately introduced to draw a suggestion of the infinite into the finite subject of the picture, it can also be traced on their bronzes, their vases, in their way of grouping them; even in their manner of furnishing their rooms. Whether it originated in the clearness of their atmosphere, in the vastness of their plains, the grandeur of their mountain-ranges, the breadth of

their rivers, or in some fundamental quality of their mind—their splendid sense of spaciousness certainly saved their art from that tendency to overcrowding, overcompressing, which the cramped conditions of cities much too small for the surging life within them forced on European art from the days of the Parthenon and the Palatine palaces downwards to Gothic cathedrals and New York skyscrapers.

There is nothing cramped in what were once the palaces of three mighty dynasties—the Mongols, the Mings, and the Manchus: immense approaches to magnificent gateways, miles of massive walls, vast courtyards intersected by limpid waters, bridged and bordered with carved and dazzlingly white marble, wide flights of steps leading to throne-rooms of Purple Light, of Assured Peace, of Sublime Union, great halls splendid and exalted with large, dark sacrificial bronzes in front of them, as if they were the dwelling-place of some very august, very solemn, very mighty divinities.

The dominating note is the majestic, as it should be in a palace; but there is also the sheer strength of the fortress in the almost threatening perpendiculars of the watchtowers, of the huge walls, blank but for a triple gateway superbly arched—the central gate immensely lofty, its heavy, brass-studded doors only meant to swing open for imperial processions of triumph, thanksgiving, achievement.

The pomp of these processions is barely a remembrance now, so lost are they to sight or hope beneath the dust raised by invading armies, the mud stirred by internal strife. It was not processionally through Gates of Supreme Concord that Tzŭ Hsi, the Empress-Dowager, left in the night of August 15, 1901, when the grip of the Boxer

fanatics had definitely been knocked off Peking by the guns of the Allies, to be replaced by their own.

It was the hour of the Tiger, 3 a.m., when the starry peace of night begins to fail and the approaching day is felt, not as a dawn of light and brightness but as a return of leaden weariness and pain.

The whole of the southern city was in the hands of the enemy—the light of their camp-fires punctuating the darkness, the sound of their bugles occasionally breaking the silence with shrill notes of warning.

The most devoted of the Empress-Dowager's attendants were with her, and Kuang-Hsü, the unhappy, the nominal Emperor, who had proclaimed reform while there still was time, and whom she nearly had slain because he had seen farther than she.

If she had any thought beyond the perils of the moment she must have hated him more bitterly than ever, now that her usurped leadership stood condemned by disasters greater than the hastiest reform schemes could ever have brought about.

Those who have been persecuted for holding opinions subsequent events prove true are not usually favourites in the dark hour when they could turn round and say, "I told you so."

He did not say it. He said nothing. Perhaps he even felt nothing—nothing but the irksome weariness of this swift and secret departure—its weariness, and its utter uselessness to him. What sense was there for him to run away from fate? Long ago it had done its worst on him. His physical existence had indeed been spared, but of his spirit nothing had been left him but an immense capacity for pain.

The Pearl Concubine, the only being at that crowded court who had any real devotion for him, was there too—unluckily for her.

No, there was nothing processional in this huddled gathering of frightened creatures round the rough carts in which they were to escape; nothing imperial either in the cause or the occasion of their flight, and the shabby clothes they had put on were too appropriate to look like a disguise. Tzu Hsi must have wondered at her own appearance, her silks and jewels put away or hidden beneath the coarse blue cotton of a Chinese peasant woman's dress, well out of sight of eyes that might prove treacherous. Nor did it make the situation easier to bear that she herself was most to blame for not having foreseen this wretched but inevitable end to the mad schemes she had encouraged for freeing China from the oppression of the foreigners. They had more than miscarried. The foreigners had not been evicted. They were there now at her very heel, strong as giants, innumerable as locusts, and thirsting for revenge; mere physical safety a question of hours-perhaps only minutes-you never knew, with those odious foreign devils.

So she was reduced to having to run away from her own palace, leaving it to be ransacked, looted, perhaps set on fire, as the English years ago had looted and burnt the Summer Palace; to take flight in the murky grey of struggling dawn, to plunge into all the fears and hardships, the pitiful expedients, the terrified cunning of the hunted—she who had been a huntress all her life. Every one of her hopes laid low, her pride hard hit, and nothing left but her indomitable energy, her fiery temper, and her wounded vanity.

On these nerves raw with the humiliation of doubt in her own sagacity, of fury with herself at having been so amazingly deceived, broke the supplication of Precious Pearl entreating that the panic order for flight should be rescinded. Not to abandon the people, not to show fear, to let the Emperor at least remain to face the worst the victorious Allies could inflict, that was the burden of her petition, couched in language as humble as she could make it, for Tzu Hsi was Empress, with unfettered power over her dependents' life. Yet she, the suppliant, the mere concubine, was the real Empress there, the royal soul who knew that trials and tribulations multiply for those who run away from them, that in the hour of peril there is no help but courage. The Empress-Dowager in her peasant's disguise, intent only on the safety of her own skin, was the slave spirit, her will to power irritated by opposition into squint-eyed vindictiveness.

Here was her opportunity to regain her tottering selfesteem; here lay some one on her knees before her on whom she could vent the full measure of her displeasure, assert what right remained to her of issuing orders, of being obeyed, of making some one smart under the lash of her imperial anger, of crushing something conscious, living, sensitive—and with absolute impunity. It would give her back the feeling of strength that was threatening to forsake her, re-establish among her attendants the proper awe for her greatness, which might otherwise give way any moment. She did not feel impressive in those ill-made, unbecoming clothes. And perhaps it would drive that clammy sensation of fear out of her own heart and put it into the heart of another-another, too, whom she had always hated. Luckless Precious Pearl!

Her candour, her public-spirited courage, her disinterested loyalty to the phantom Emperor were not qualities which the unmitigated worldliness of the Empress-Dowager could understand; and to most the thing they do not understand is the thing they suspect and fear and detest, more particularly when it makes them dimly conscious of their own moral inferiority. The snake-like swiftness of her blows, wherewith she had won her way to power at a lamentably stupefied and cowardly court, shot out at this fateful moment. Kill the impudent creature who had dared offer advice where it had not been asked for. Did they think she could be insulted with impunity because she was leaving the palace? The ungrateful wretch! She should die for her insolence—be pitched into the nearest well, since there was no time to arrange for anything more elaborate.

And it was done. There, in the wane of this warm summer night—the sentinels of the Allies watchful, only too far away; good people and just, asleep and not even stirring in their dreams; the fading stars indifferent, the owls and the bats and other prowlers of the night busy with their own predations—this hideous act of injustice was perpetrated, to temporarily soothe the wounded vanity of a woman who had brought the throne she had usurped to grief and shame.

To the eunuchs who carried out the crime, fear of the Empress-Dowager, obedience to her most outrageous orders, had inevitably enough become second nature. Kuang-Hsü attempted to protest, to plead, but the dominating will-power of the Empress-Dowager had crushed his spirit too completely. There was nothing compelling in his voice, nothing threatening behind his

appeal. It could be brushed aside like the buzzing of a tiresome but harmless insect. And this pitiful wreck of an Emperor could see the one being he loved and trusted dragged off and drowned without gathering himself together, flinging his own life into the balance, arising and smiting the old woman who had given the infamous order. Nevertheless, the ghastly impression remained burnt into his brain for the rest of his life, only a handful of years, it is true, but it was one of his very last acts to point out for condign punishment the eunuch whom he considered the most guilty, as having been the first to blacken the Pearl Concubine in the eyes of the Empress-Dowager. Thus he may have brightened the end of his conscious existence with a glimmer of hope for satisfied revenge. Otherwise the end of his life was as grey and miserable as almost its entire course, and the nobler spirit of Precious Pearl had probably long ago passed beyond any such littleness to where justice is a power and a great reality, not a thin disguise for the vulgar passion of revenge. But a tenacious vindictiveness, secret and like some very old and potent amulet scribbled over with queerly distorted memories, was the only support Kuang-Hsü had found to preserve his self-esteem through the extremity of his humiliation. Good-luck had not given him courage, ill-luck not taught him charity. So he bungled his death as he had bungled his life. The shadow of death had been his daily companion so long, was the creepy fear around each corner, the hidden threat in every insult of the eunuchs, the coiling danger in every mocking smile, every sullen silence of his consort, it had almost grown one with consciousness, and when its full reality did come upon him he failed to understand that it was something

for which one should pull oneself together, something one should receive like an unique occasion, like a solemn visitor out of the deepest mystery of fate.

But his feeble hands never had known how to knead the opportunities that came to him into something strong and lasting—they let them slip through nervous fingers, to be driven back on him in staggering storms, in overwhelming clouds of dust. Yet his sympathy was warm enough, his intellect strong enough, to grasp the urgent need for reform years before the idea had penetrated the opaque ignorance of the other Manchus. What he lacked was the natural shrewdness which takes the right measure of men and things and the acquired experience which has some conception of practical ways and means. Neither was there in him that reserve force of will-power without which it is almost impossible to triumph over that hornets' nest of enemies which any new idea, any attempt at reform, inevitably stirs up, knocking, as it is bound to do, against what men like, not because they think it good but because they are accustomed to it. The spring which leaps over difficulties, rises above adverse circumstances, cows adversaries and carries its own schemes forward, had either never been born or had somehow been broken in him by the careless handling of an intensely sensitive nature during a childhood unhappily placed between the rivalry of two Empress-Dowagers: the one kind, motherly, easygoing; the other alert, domineering, and whole-heartedly selfish. To Kuang-Hsü's lasting misfortune, the latter won.

The motherly Eastern Empress died, or was made to die partaking of cakes sent her by her ambitious colleague. Had fate been kinder, allowing the influences for good to thrive instead of putting them under the heel of the influences for evil, China might now be well on her way back to greatness, prosperity, and independence. But because one man was weak and one woman strong, the gates of Paradise have been closed upon her for many many years to come. So it was in the beginning, so it will be to the end.

Kuang-Hsü's glory of completely independent rule, when edicts of reform broke forth from his palace swift and thick as April blossoms and every whit as fragile, only lasted a hundred days—a nobler hundred days than those of Napoleon between Elba and Waterloo, when the old War Lion tried to reconquer the prey that had been torn from his loosening teeth, but still only a paltry hundred days. The world may have been created in seven days, but it certainly cannot be reformed at anything even approaching that rate of speed; at least not if the reform is to be genuine and not a mere matter of paper edicts and pious resolutions.

When the hundred days were over, the changes he had introduced were over, his independence was over, his freedom, almost his life.

He had neglected either to conciliate the Empress-Dowager or to paralyse her power, had begun building his beautiful castles before having made sure of the ground on which they were to stand. So they remained castles in the air, dropping to pieces over him in the hard light of facts, burying his whole life beneath the weight of their ruins.

The Empress-Dowager was not a believer in reform. Not in 1898. She had found the old ways of corruption far too pleasant for her feet.

After August 1900, when the failure of her army, resulting

from this very corruption, had forced her into humiliating exile, she was converted. But it never was the good of China, the need of the country, that moulded her opinions. Considerations of her personal comfort or discomfort were the only arguments she was capable of understanding. For hers was not a lofty, far-seeing mind, only one having all the assurance, the oneness of purpose, of the intensely selfish, giving others an impression of strength, of completeness, undoubtedly more impressive than the hesitancies of the sensitive and the tender-hearted.

And Kuang-Hsü was intensely sensitive, suffered all a highly nervous character's inadequacy in a period of crisis which demanded swiftest resolution and most determined action.

When from her gay retreat in the Summer Palace the Empress-Dowager leapt out at him in support of the conservatism which his edicts jeopardized, he crumpled up helplessly before her well directed blows, unable to parry them by any ability to strike, any resourcefulness of his own. He submitted to imprisonment, submitted to signing edicts decreeing his surrender of power into her hands, submitted to being whittled down into a dumb victim, when the choice lay between ruthless self-assertion or heroic martyrdom. A sad, shrunken figure. Lightly he had undertaken the great task of reform, and it had proved too heavy for his shoulders. It broke his back and left him prone and annulled on the hard road of his remaining years.

When the little flame of consciousness which was all he knew about himself went out completely, no one took much notice. Some doctors came, put up a slight pretence at help, and went away again. Inquiries about his health were made in the correct order and number prescribed by etiquette, but there was no love, no hope to hold him back, no devotion to tend and comfort him. In a cheerless, loveless, neglected room, weak and suffering, he dropped out of the life that had wounded him so much. It is not reported that the Empress-Dowager indulged in any tears. Probably she was glad to be rid of the reproach of that submissive phantom presence. But her gladness was short-lived.

Kuang-Hsü died at five o'clock in the afternoon of November 14, 1908, in his grey, ineffectual manner; the following afternoon, at three, Tzu Hsi passed away, impressively, grandly, as befitted the woman who for fifty years had held so much of the fate of four hundred million people in her small, firm hands. Troubled years on the whole: the Anglo-French invasion which drove her court into panic-stricken flight from Peking to the northern summer residence, Jehol; the Tai Ping Rebellion, which seared the country through and through but taught the Manchus nothing; the war with Japan, which turned China's weakness from a suspicion held by the few to a fact patent to all; her nephew's hundred days; the Boxer troubles; the Russo-Japanese War, when the ancestral home of her dynasty was made the marchingground and battlefield of foreign armies, notwithstanding China's declared neutrality, thus early in the twentieth century might being acknowledged as right; the uncertainties of her position, the jealousies to be overcome, the enmities to be conquered—she lived through all this, triumphed over much of it, and was granted a spell of life and power extending from the days of sedan-chairs and stately barges to railways, steamers, telegraphs, and

telephones; from the picturesque dignity of ancient national costumes to the absurdities of Paris fashions; from the patriarchal simplicity of a world deeply rooted in an immeasurable past to a world of intricacies and complicated movements rooted in a desire for change and directed towards an ill-defined future.

She has been called great, but she really only was strong, for, having the opportunity to guide the dynasty into the way of progress and safety, she actually hastened the threatening débâcle through a fatal clinging to narrow family prejudices and considerations when only the widest outlook could save the situation: a failing which seems the bane of all dynasties from whom the mandate of Heaven is passing away. Blissfully self-centred, and herself too popular to stand in any sort of danger from revolutionary propaganda, she may not have cared very much about what might happen after her death. "Après moi le déluge" has always been a favourite motto with decaying royalty.

She had schemed and plotted, intrigued and murdered, to obtain paramount power; having got it, she thoroughly enjoyed it. Neither the old Confucian idea that the sovereign is the father of his people and must bestow on it all a father's love and care if, as in duty bound, he wishes to carry out the will of Heaven and so preserve its favour, nor the modern theory that the ruler is the servant of the people and must do his work of governing efficiently under pain of summary dismissal, troubled her conscience.

She maintained the eunuch system and connived at the extortions and illegal interferences of her chamberlains, An Te-hai and Li Lien-ying, though she fully realized that more than one dynasty had been undermined and

brought to its fall by the burrowings of these rats and foxes of the palace, rendering as they do the honesty and proper working of the public service a practical impossibility. But these two eunuchs were both skilful and devoted personal servants—beyond that she didn't care to look.

Mere children were raised to the Dragon Throne in order that her own power and that of her clan should be indefinitely prolonged. Large sums destined for strengthening the navy, and badly needed for that purpose, by all manner of indirections found their way into her hands, and were gaily spent on beautifying her Summer Palace.

However, on this latter point, seeing the incalculable amount of evil wrought by battleships, the huge cost of their construction, the shortness and sinister ugliness of their life compared to the perennial beauty of the summer retreat of an attractive woman, can one blame her so much? Is she not rather deserving of praise? Her motives were selfish, but nevertheless she may have had a shrewder sense of comparative values than all the excitable members and presidents of foamingly patriotic navy leagues. She had a healthy faith in the enjoyment of the moment, and succeeded in making many moments of her life bright and beautiful. Our drab and strenuous conception of civilization calls this frivolous, but there may well be a deeper wisdom in it than in our wanton sacrifice not only of the moment, but of the whole youth of the world for the sake of distant, doubtful, and frequently wholly dishonest commercial gains.

She may have caused China to lose the war against Japan, but she preserved for it that perfect little jewel

the Summer Palace, worth infinitely more than those sadly overrated things, naval victories—after all, only a flattering label for what is essentially a piece of cruelty and cunning, a reversion to the ethics of primitive headhunters. If people were to begin to think clearly and honestly instead of letting themselves be hypnotized by the drum-taps of big-sounding words like National Honour, Vindication of Rights, Triumph, Victory, they would confess that dwelling in "Gardens of prolonged Springtime" is vastly preferable to being cooped up inside the steel-plated bowels of a Dreadnought. True, writers whose pens work more rapidly than their brains will assure them that the one type of life is degenerate, the other virile. How it is that the so-called degenerate life makes for health and happiness and the perpetuation of the race, and the virile life (so called) for destruction and death, they do not stoop to explain, and nobody troubles to ask. The excellent habit of childhood of fixing a large and shrill "Why?" to every startling presentment of facts is always given up too soon.

Tzh Hsi, the mighty Empress-Dowager, not having been brought up on Church magazines and patriotic dailies, escaped having her natural instinct for the great importance of cheerful enjoyment of the present warped and soured by empty rhetoric. She spent many hours full of sunshine and laughter in the brightly coloured pavilions, the marble terraces, the delightful gardens rising from the limpid mirror of a lovely lake to the summit of the "Mountain of a Thousand Years of Longevity." Her portrait hangs there now, draped in imperial yellow silk, bright and smiling over an altar on which is placed the usual group of tall candlesticks, flower-vases, and incense-bowls.

As a picture it does not rank high. It is full of the crude effects resulting from a lack of that insight, that subconscious intimacy with the subject represented, without which real portraiture is impossible. There obviously was no sort of spiritual communion between painter and model, and one wonders at the taste which in the country of Ku K'ai Chi went to the United States of America for an artist.

But fine artistic perception was not the special gift of Tzŭ Hsi. The marble barge she had built for her delectation, and which is more like a miniature pier projected into the lake, is surmounted by a wooden structure exhibiting all the shoddiness and vulgarity of a café on a Paris boulevard. However, close by there is a charming little pavilion poised on a marble bridge, mirrored in the gliding ripples of the lake, as if it were the dwelling of some lovely Nereid. And there are bronzes—the ox couchant in its complacent tranquillity, the Buddha shrine half-way up the terraced hill, incense-vases, life-size cranes—and majolica arches, memorial tablets of massive, richly carved marble, beautiful things dating back to the great days of Kwang Hsi and Ch'ien Lung, when Chinese art had not yet been distracted by inferior European models.

Still, it is not as a work of art that the Summer Palace should be judged at all, only as a bit of life, of feminine life, as the most delightful piece of femininity that ever translated itself into bricks and mortar.

Most modern capitals have whole blocks of plate-glass and monumental structures exclusively dedicated to the business of catering for the tastes of women; almost all the churches and many theatres are run entirely for the benefit of women. In Peking, on the contrary, the feminine element, even after the Revolution and its greatly advertised advent of liberty, is singularly absent, and seems to lead a very retired life, if indeed it lives at all. Even the shrill assertiveness of female plutocracy freshly landed from the other side of the Pacific looks foolish there and out of place, and unconsciously drops into an attitude of apology for its intrusive existence.

But on the southern shores of Lake K'un-ming, to the west of Peking, Chinese femininity has broken its bonds, and, all the richer and sweeter for its long repression, has covered a whole hill-side with the joy of its capricious elegance, the charm of its irresponsible daintiness.

Up and down the slopes it winds in endless covered passages, peeping out into the sunshine and the lake through a multitude of fantastically fashioned windows-leafshaped, trefoil-shaped, bottle-shaped, square, round, oval -and linking up lovely little pavilions with superimposed roofs of glittering tiles jauntily turned up at the ends. There, too, the windows are varied, the glass in them decorated with flowers, birds, and butterflies, splashed on with a few graceful strokes of vivid colour. Along the softly purring undulations of inland waves, untroubled even by a whisper of the foam and fury of ocean gales, it meanders in dreamy lovers' walks, arched over by the discreet dusk of immemorial cypresses. It hides in a maze of mysterious little paths curling round rockeries or suddenly diving right through them into slippery darkness, to end in surprising grottoes full of stalactites and gods and a twilight warm from the gorgeous sun outside. It frolics in the delicious interlacing of open air and indoor life, of sheltered courtyards, well-screened verandahs which lead into fascinating rooms with panels of carved

woodwork framing more painted flowers, birds, and butterflies. At each corner of the courtyard jasmine, peachblossom, peonies growing in huge pots of bronze or porcelain, and through round or oval doorways a sunlit peep into other equally delightful courtyards. In between, brooklets running over polished marble, bridges of marble; higher up, flights and flights of steps, and the sheer height of an immense wall to support the great rotunda dedicated to Buddha.

That must have been done in a fit of absent-mindedness. Buddha would have taken terrified flight at so unrestrained an outbreak of femininity as displays itself around this shrine. Not a solemn God of Renunciation but a laughing God of Happiness, Puck or Cupid, is the tutelary genius presiding over this dreamland made for fairies, princesses, or goddesses, or all three; for when spring is in the air and youth is in the blood, do they not merge the one into the other?

The whole view is a panorama of delight. One longs for a Fragonard to paint it all, to people these shimmering terraces, these dainty pavilions, these fragrant gardens with the beautiful court ladies who in their broidered shoes, their silken dresses embellished with elaborate needlework of flowers, birds, and butterflies, their pendants of iridescent pearls and transparent filigree, their glossy black hair ornamented with jewelled pins of gold and jade, and coronets of artificial flowers, once laughed and lingered over their tinkling teacups in the sunshine and summer moonlight of long ago. Occasionally perhaps the tea was scented with something less harmless than jasmine leaves or lotos petals, but that was the rarest exception. As a rule served in delicate porcelains on

trays of gold-dust lacquer or chiselled silver, it derived its sweetest flavour from the elegant gaiety, the graceful wit, the faultless manners of well-born and well-bred women, whose position as the loveliest achievement of the race nobody had yet begun to question.

Now, the Empress whom these great ladies served is dead, her dynasty dethroned, and much of the light and beauty of their times, which an increasingly sombre world could ill spare, dead and dethroned also. For a little. Nothing is permanent, least of all death. There may yet be strange resurrections, amazing beatifications of what was denounced and apparently abolished as rank anathema.

Light and beauty—and that which produces them, love—the present needs them sorely enough, when old nations in blind fury, new nations with criminal frivolity, are all intent on crucifying the God of compassion and universal brotherhood whom they profess to worship.

But even so, even now in this widespread uproar of all the folly and wickedness of an utterly commercialized age, light and beauty and love are stronger than the darkness, greater than death. Who can banish them out of the sky? Who can drive them out of the inmost heart of nature? They are radiant in the sunlit air which dances over the mirror of the lake, sparkles round all the brilliant tiles, the dazzling marbles and glittering majolicas of Tzŭ Hsi's summer residence: abundant in every green nook, every blossoming flower-bed of these "Gardens of Unending Spring"; gardens which must never be abolished, which must, when mankind awakens to reason, be extended everywhere, that no town, no market-place, no village shall ever again be without them.

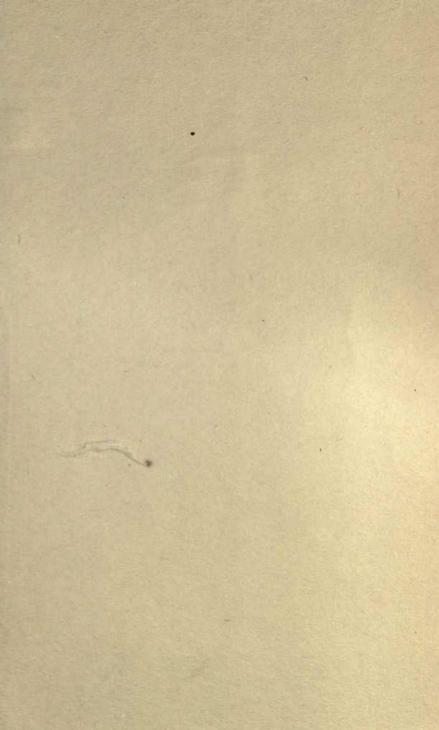
It could be done for less than the seven million pounds a day now spent with great hurrahings and clapping of hands on turning gardens into a corpse-strewn wilderness. It will be done when benevolence and righteousness develop into as potent a driving force of human action as malevolence and covetousness are now. Human life is said to have begun in a garden. It must insist on its forgotten birthright and return to Gardens of Eden where no man's hand is raised against another and where God Himself walks in the cool of the evening.

The gardens are waiting ready to be called into life. There is enough sunshine in the blue of heaven, enough fertility in the soil of earth, enough labour in the arms of men to work the change—the change so badly needed from the obsession of the exploitation of the earth by leagued bands of the most cunning, back to the teaching of the most wise, to the balance of harmonies between the guidance of Heaven, the gifts of earth, the needs, the duties, and the glory of man.

At a few favoured spots, for some precious moments they are all there together—the wisdom of the past, the brightness of the future, the aspiration of the present. They seem to illuminate every stretch of the marvellous panorama which holds one breathless, eager, spell-bound, on the uppermost terrace of this imperial fairyland. The departing and the coming, the end of a whole epoch, the beginnings of a new, are curiously intermingled on that wide plain of Northern China, with budding summer harvests bright and green around the tombs of generations dead for centuries; with its cottages full of happy, blue-clad children nestling in the ruins of decaying temples—that immortal plain spreading wide and level like the sea

around Peking, China's lovely capital, magnificent in all its desolation, the might of its mediæval walls showing grey and battered, but still upright, through black smoke of modern activities. Nearer to view, hills crowned with glittering pagodas, hills with temples and monasteries half hidden in the shadows of majestic pines, hills with forests of oak-trees, hills of a myriad flowers, and beyond, pencilled in flowing outlines against the blue of a sunsteeped sky, mountains bathed in a haze of rose-tinted opals, closing human vision with the eternal challenge of a distance to which there is no pathway, a height to which there is no road. No road but that of hope and faithhope in the fundamental goodness of the world, faith in the perennial youth of life, which laughs at our shifting codes of right and wrong, humbles our boasts and belies our misgivings, wipes out our little triumphs and annuls our vain regrets, lays the visions of expectation and the ghosts of remembrance with a warm reality transcending both, and which out of infinite abundance continually brings forth the fresh, the unforeseen, the wonderful.

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107 Pencil Speakings from Peking, by A. E. Grantham. A book that is hard to characterize. Perhaps it might be termed a romantic chronicle of old China, or better, a dramatic history. The author has certainly assembled many strange and fascinating facts, and if these are placed in too mellow a light, one can easily find a corrective. Mrs. Grantham and William Morris would have made ideal collaborators! 8vo., cloth, (1918). Out-of-print. \$3.50

